

Venezuelan ex-president Carlos Andres Perez dies

In this undated photo released by Carlos Andres Perez's family, Venezuela's former President Carlos Andres Perez looks on at his home in Miami. Perez died on Saturday, Dec. 25, 2010, in Miami of a heart attack, his daughter Maria Francia Perez said.

(AP Photo/Carlos Andres Perez's family)

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Happy New Year



On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel: 582-7800 Monday, December 27, 2010

Daley now Chicago mayor 1 day longer than father

CHICAGO – Richard M. Daley on Sunday surpassed his father's tenure, becoming the longest-serving mayor of Chicago.

Daley has served 7,917 days in office or 21 years and eight months. That's one day more than his father, Richard J. Daley, who died in office in 1976.

Daley announced earlier this year that he would retire and not run for a seventh term.

When he leaves office next spring he will have served about five months longer than his father. Between them, the Daleys have been in charge in Chicago for 42 of the past 55 years.

Daley, 68, told reporters last week that he believed his father was the city's greatest mayor.

"My father, the son will always say 'it's the father,'" Daley said.

Edward Bedore was budget director for both Daleys.

"One was a builder," Bedore told the Chicago Sun-Times. "The other completed the house."

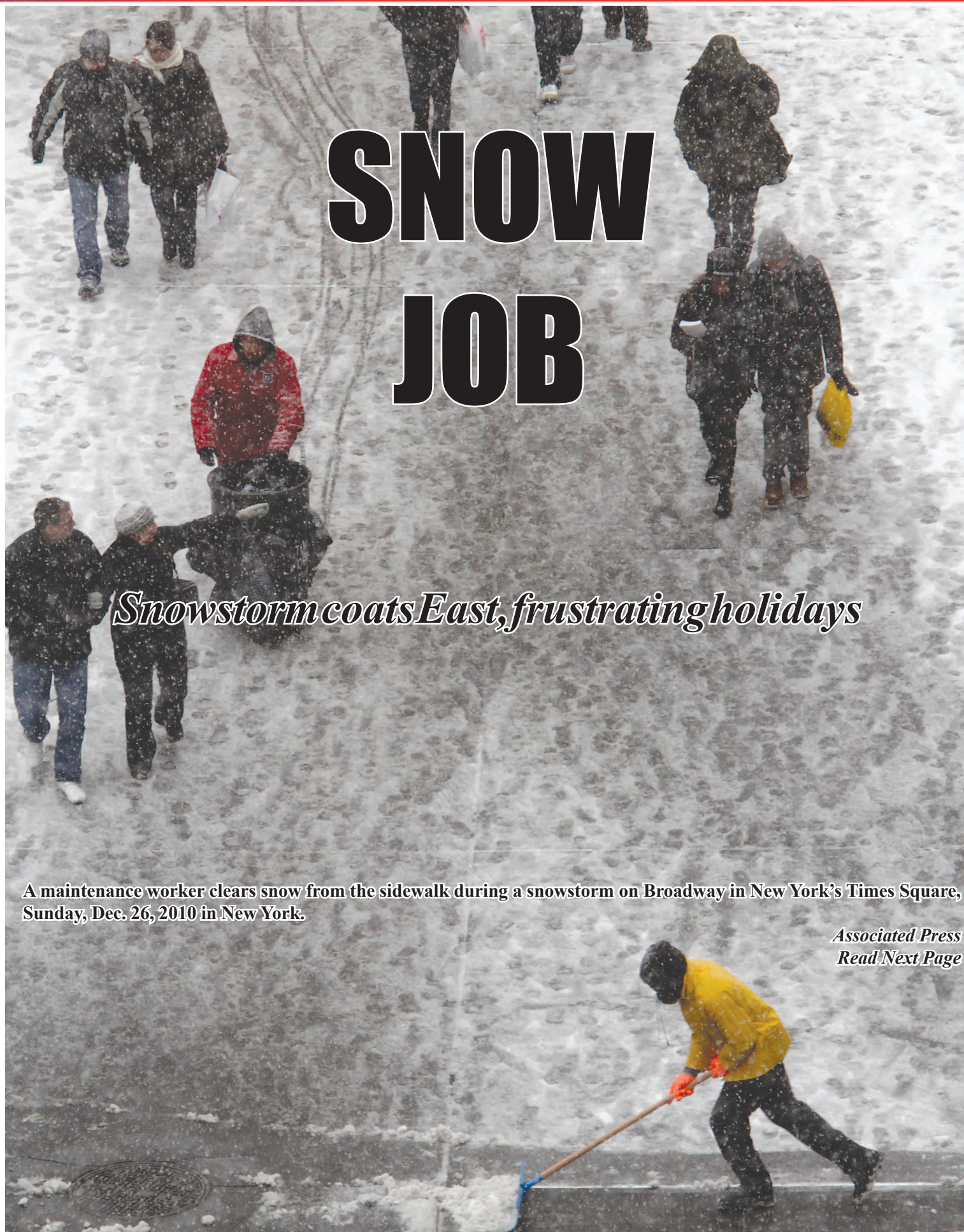
Richard J. Daley was 53 when he was elected mayor in 1955. The Sears Tower, now known as the Willis Tower, was built while he was in office, along with McCormick Place convention center and the modern O'Hare International Airport. □

SNOW JOB

Snowstorm coats East, frustrating holidays

A maintenance worker clears snow from the sidewalk during a snowstorm on Broadway in New York's Times Square, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010 in New York.

Associated Press
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Snowstorm coats East, frustrating holiday travel



NEW YORK — A powerful winter storm lay a snow blanket from the South to the Northeast on Sunday, turning roads slick, stranding thousands of airline, train and bus passengers and putting a chill in retailers' day-after-Christmas sales.

Up to 20 inches of snow were expected in some areas, including Philadelphia, where the Eagles-Vikings NFL game was canceled, and Boston, where an aquarium had to protect — of all things — penguin ice sculptures from the elements.

Snow started falling around New York City late Sunday morning, by which time nearly 1,000 flights out of the region's three major airports had already been canceled in anticipation of the storm. More cancellations were expected.

"We left the day after Christmas to avoid the Christmas craze. I guess that didn't work out so well," said Colleen James of Montclair, N.J. She, her husband, their two young children and their dachshund were at Newark Airport trying to reach family in Iowa, but their connecting flight to Chicago was delayed more than two and a half hours.

Her husband, Graham James, was resigning himself to postponing their trip a month. "Now we're worried about just driving home because of the crazy snow," Graham James said. Some flights out of Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, D.C., Baltimore and the Carolinas also were canceled. Amtrak canceled train service from New York to Maine on Sunday evening, after doing the same earlier for several trains in Virginia.

Bus companies also canceled routes up and down the East Coast, affecting thousands of travelers.

Kate Lindquist, on her way home from New Hampshire to New York City, was greeted with a handwritten sign at a Boston bus station: "Sorry, we are closed today."

"To have this happen on a Sunday during a holiday weekend is incredibly frustrating," she told the AP in an e-mail.

The Northeast is getting the brunt of the storm. Forecasters issued a blizzard warning for New York City for Sunday and Monday, with a forecast of 11 to 16 inches of snow and strong winds that will reduce visibility to near zero at times. A blizzard warning was also in effect for Rhode Island and most of eastern Massachusetts including Boston, with forecasters predicting 15 to 20 inches of snow. A blizzard warning is issued when snow is accompanied by sustained winds or gusts over 35 mph.

As much as 18 inches could fall on the New Jersey shore with wind gusts over 40 mph. Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter declared a snow emergency as of 2 p.m. Sunday, and he urged residents to stay off the roads.

The NFL moved the Philadelphia Eagles' game against the Minnesota Vikings from Sunday night to Tuesday because of the blizzard. It's the third time this season snow has forced a change of plans for the Vikings. Two of their games this month needed to be relocated because the roof of their stadium collapsed.

In Boston, Mayor Thomas Menino declared a snow emergency that bans parking on all major streets, and the

New England Aquarium bubble-wrapped its four 5-foot-tall penguin ice sculptures to protect them from the wind and snow.

More than 2,400 sanitation workers were working in 12-hour shifts to clear New York City's 6,000 miles of streets. Not that Mayor Michael Bloomberg wanted people to use them.

"I understand that a lot of families need to get home after a weekend away, but please don't get on the roads unless you absolutely have to," Bloomberg said.

In Rhode Island, emergency officials encouraged businesses to let employees report to work late Monday, saying road conditions for the early morning commute Monday would be treacherous. The snow was easier to enjoy for people with no place to go. As the wind swirled snow through the doors of a Brooklyn supermarket, New Yorkers hurried to pick up a few staples before heading back home to hunker down.

"I'm seeing it as a great excuse to stay in and relax and drink tea," said Toni Gifford, who works in academics and has

the week off.

"Love snowy days when I don't have to go anywhere. Staying in just me and my cozy new socks," author Neesha Meminger wrote on Twitter from her home in the Bronx.

She told the AP she's able to savor the moment because her children, ages 6 and 9, are on holiday break: "If this was during the school week, I would be cursing."

The weather deterred some people from hitting day-after-Christmas sales, but that appeared to be a relatively light blow for retailers coming off a strong shopping season.

"People will just wait a day to do exchanges and use their gift cards. It's no big deal," said Greg Maloney, CEO of the retail practice of Jones Lang LaSalle, which manages malls across the country.

The monster storm is the result of a low pressure system off the North Carolina coast and was strengthening as it moved northeast, according to the National Weather Service.

Travel misery began a day earlier in parts of the South, which was hit with a white Christmas for the record

books. Columbia, S.C., had its first significant Christmas snow since weather records were first kept in 1887. Atlanta had just over an inch of snow the first measurable accumulation on Christmas Day since the 1880s.

The North Carolina Highway Patrol said late Saturday that most of the roads in and around Asheville were either covered or partially covered with snow and ice.

"We're busy," Ryan Dean of Dean's Wrecker Service in Raleigh, N.C., said Sunday. "We've been out since 3 in the morning pulling people out of the ditch."

The National Weather Service said 8.5 inches of snow fell in Franklinton, N.C., about 30 miles north of Raleigh, from Saturday through Sunday.

Diane Smith, 55, said her power was out for about four hours there Sunday morning, but she and her husband have a generator. Relatives, including two grandchildren, who live nearby came over for breakfast and to get warm before going home after power was restored. "It's beautiful," Smith said. "As long as I have power, I love it." □

Man quits job, makes living suing e-mail spammers

SAN FRANCISCO — Daniel Balsam hates spam. Most everybody does, of course. But he has acted on his hate as few have, going far beyond simply hitting the delete button. He sues them.

Eight years ago, Balsam was working as a marketer when he received one too many e-mail pitches to enlarge his breasts.

Enraged, he launched a Web site called Danhatesspam.com, quit a career in marketing to go to law school and is making a decent living suing companies who flood his e-mail inboxes with offers of cheap drugs, free sex and unbelievable vacations.

"I feel like I'm doing a little bit of good cleaning up the Internet," Balsam said.

From San Francisco Superior Court small claims court to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Balsam, based in San Francisco, has filed many lawsuits, including dozens



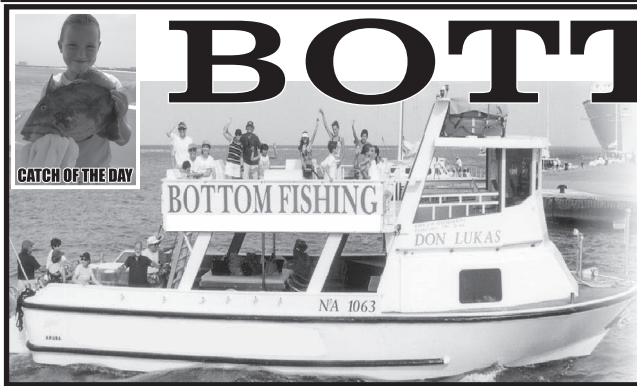
before he graduated law school in 2008, against e-mail marketers he says violate anti-spamming laws.

His many victories are mere rain drops in the ocean considering that Cisco Systems Inc. estimates that there are 200 billion spam messages circulating a day, accounting for 90 percent of all e-mail.

Still, Balsam settles enough lawsuits and collects enough from judgments to make a living. He has racked up well

in excess of \$1 million in court judgments and lawsuit settlements with companies accused of sending illegal spam.

His courtroom foes contend that Balsam is one of many sole practitioners unfairly exploiting anti-spam sentiments and laws. They accuse him of filing lawsuits against out-of-state companies that would rather pay a small settlement than expend the resources to fight the legal claims. □



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NY, other states scrimp on Civil War anniversary

ALBANY, N.Y. – New York state contributed 448,000 troops and \$150 million to the Union cause during the Civil War, not to mention untold tons of supplies, food, guns and munitions.

But with the 150th anniversary of the war's start just months away, New York state government has so far failed to scrounge up a single Yankee dollar to commemorate a conflict it played such a major role in winning.

New York isn't alone. Other states saddled with similar budget woes are unable or unwilling to set aside taxpayer funds for historic re-enactments and museum exhibits when public employees are being laid off and services slashed.

Even South Carolina, where the war's first shots were fired upon Fort Sumter in April 1861, has declined to provide government funding for organizations planning events in the Palmetto State.

"State money right now is hard to find for anything," said New York state historian Robert Weible. "That's life. We're all living with that."

At least 21 states have formed commissions, committees or initiatives to commemorate the 150th anniversary of America's bloodiest war, starting next year and running into 2015. Of those states, Virginia and Pennsylvania appear to be leading the way in efforts to plan, promote and stage Civil War commemorations.

"Most states have very little or limited funding," said Cheryl Jackson, executive director of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission. "That's not unique among the states, what you're finding in New York."

The Virginia organization has received an annual \$2 million appropriation from the state since 2008, Jackson said. Three out of every five Civil War battles were fought in Virginia, home to the Confederate capital, Richmond, and some of the South's greatest generals, including Robert E. Lee.

"Virginia bore its share of scars, many of which are still there, so it's natural that the state take the lead," said James I. "Bud" Robertson Jr., a Virginia Tech history professor and member of the state's commission.

Pennsylvania has managed to collect nearly \$5 million in government funding for its commemoration, including \$800,000 in federal grants, according to Barbara Franco, executive director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The key, she said, was Pennsylvania's decision to start its planning in 2007, just before the economy tanked and government coffers shriveled. Plus, Franco added, Pennsylvania didn't wait for Congress to get around to creating a national Civil War commission, something lawmakers in Washington, D.C., so far have failed to do.

On the federal level, the National Parks Service is coordinating Civil War events planned through 2015 at more than 75 battlefields and historic sites, as well as at museums and other privately operated sites.

On the state level, various local and regional groups are being enlisted to muster resources for 150th anniversary events.

"Sometimes national commissions are helpful, sometimes they're not helpful," Franco said. "Perhaps this grassroots approach provides more opportunities to get down to the real issues that a national commission would never be able to do."

New York so far doesn't plan to create a Civil War commemoration commission. But Weible said talks already have begun between his office and local history-related entities to come up with ways to mark the war in the coming years.

"Our concern right now is trying to get everybody on the same page and cooperating with each other and talking to people they don't normally talk to," he said. "You don't need money to make good things happen. It's nice if you can get it. But we work with what we've got."

What New York has to work with is a deep well of Civil War resources, even though no battles were fought on its soil.

New York communities large and small were touched in some way by the Civil War, and many still have the evidence to prove it, from old industrial sites that supplied Union

troops to vast collections of artifacts held by state and local museums. Besides providing the most soldiers during the war, New York suffered the most casualties, with 46,000 killed. Monuments and memorials to their sacrifice can be found all across the state.

More than 200 New York infantry, cavalry and artillery units served in nearly every campaign of the war, from Gettysburg to Vicksburg, said Michael Aikey, director of the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, home to more than 850 Civil War battle flags, the largest collection in the nation.

Prominent figures from the era including William Seward, Harriet Tubman, John Brown, Fredrick Douglass and Ulysses S. Grant all lived in New York, and museums and historic sites in their names can be found upstate.

With such links to its Civil War history, New York is counting on local historians, re-enactment groups and the approximately 20 Civil War round tables across the state to help organize anniversary commemorations without any government funding.

"We must definitely commemorate what those soldiers did," said Patrick Falci of Queens, past president of the Civil War Round Table of New York City. "Our job is to keep it going. What happened down there made us what we are today."

Despite the lack of an official role by New York, Weible said he's certain the state's legacy in the War Between the States will be properly honored over the next five years. "The bottom line is, we've got a great story," he said. "Stay tuned. Things are happening. We're going to make this work." □



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Dead Chicagoans don't vote, but living have tricks



CHICAGO – It's not on a par with how Chicagoans used to keep voting after they died. Or with the curious case of the man in the 1980s whose signature wound up on a local ballot application twice even though he had no fingers or thumbs. But the race for Chicago mayor is providing fresh evidence that the city's storied history for election shenanigans lives on. With Mayor Richard M. Daley's retirement opening up the office for the first time in 21 years, Illinois authorities find themselves investigating allegations that candidates to

succeed him turned in ballot-nomination petitions "signed" and "stamped" by notaries who didn't actually sign or stamp them. "The false notary, that's a brand new one on me," said Don Rose, a longtime Chicago political analyst who has worked on election reform campaigns. Exactly 50 years ago, Daley's father, Mayor Richard J. Daley, delivered big vote totals in the city to help John F. Kennedy win the presidency in 1960, fueling conspiracy theories that are debated to this date. In the decades since, safeguards have been instituted to prevent

the wholesale vote fraud the old Chicago Machine once used to elect its friends and sabotage its opponents. Those measures include independent election judges, address checks and electronic ballots. But stopping all the creative cheating is another story.

The Secretary of State's office, which launched the latest probe, said the signatures of two notary publics were faked on thousands of petition sheets submitted by four mayoral candidates, including former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun and state Sen. James Meeks, who dropped out of the race Thursday. Suspect signatures also allegedly were discovered on petitions collected for Rob Halpin, a businessman who rented the Chicago house of former White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and ran his own short-lived mayoral campaign. Local election law requires candidates to submit the signatures of 12,500 registered voters to get on the ballot, but candidates often try to submit tens of thousands more as a show of strength. And in recent years, a cottage industry of paid signature-gatherers has emerged.

State officials said there were no indications the candidates did anything wrong; they are focused on finding out who impersonated the notaries and why. The signature gatherers in question "walked in with fully executed forms,

signatures and notary signs and we just included them with our stack," said Bryan Zisis, a spokesman for Meeks. Given Chicago's political history, the discovery produced a quick reaction at City Hall. "There should be federal investigations, state investigations," the mayor blurted when asked by reporters about the scam. "If I did that, the feds would be right after me tomorrow. They'd be chasing me down the street." But these days, few think anyone in the city has the clout to sway a major election, as the elder Daley was suspected of doing. "The Boss" allegedly had precinct workers run up the numbers for Kennedy, although nothing was ever proven and Daley insisted it all was on the up and up.

It's been years since precinct workers were caught going to transient hotels to register voters without their knowledge. That practice came to light after a newspaper reporter, William Reckenwald, checked into such a hotel using the name of Irish novelist James Joyce and followed up later to find a James Joyce listed on the voter rolls from that very hotel.

In the old days, the frauds were audacious. Once in the 1970s, said Reckenwald, who investigated election abuses for years, one candidate's nominating petitions looked

like the residents of a large public housing project "had come in (and signed) in alphabetical order, and every fourth name was in the same handwriting."

"The fact that everyone in a particular precinct would vote for the same candidate and then you flip down (the ballot) and everyone in the precinct would vote for the same judge. that doesn't happen anymore," said Reckenwald, who now teaches journalism at Southern Illinois University. However, the problems with the latest petitions seem to involve at least one homeless man, who told the Chicago Sun-Times that he was paid to gather more than 3,000 voter signatures for each of two rival candidates.

The safeguards put in place in recent years have made it tougher to vote after death. The city's board of election now sends a notice to every voter address. If it is returned to the post office, the name is taken off the voter rolls, and the only way back on is through a sworn affidavit.

Another factor is technology. Voting rolls are computerized and watched a lot closer. In the 1970s, a private group, Legal Elections in All Precincts, or LEAP, was authorized to appoint independent election judges to man precincts on election day, replacing politically aligned judges who routinely turned a blind eye to vote tampering. □

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Jackson Jr says 'everyone has erred'

CHICAGO – U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., who has largely avoided the public eye of late, said in a rare interview Saturday that he is a public servant, not a perfect one, and didn't rule out a future run at higher office.

Jackson, who has been dogged by links to the corruption case against former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and questions about his own relationship with a female "social acquaintance," told The Associated Press that he continually struggles with his "personal shortcomings." That includes mending his family relationships over the "immensely personal matter" of the female acquaintance and assessing his political ambitions, which once included Chicago mayor or U.S. senator.

"Every one of us has erred in their personal lives and while I don't claim to be a perfect servant, I'm a public servant," Jackson told the AP. "Often times we carry with us the burdens of our personal shortcomings even as we struggle to articulate and clarify a message that helps other people. That what I dedicated my life to."

The congressman spoke to

the AP after delivering a rousing Christmas message to hundreds of detainees at Cook County Boot Camp along with his father, the Rev. Jesse Jackson. It was an unusual public appearance for the congressman.

He has repeatedly denied interview requests since 2008, when Blagojevich was charged with trying to auction off President Barack Obama's old U.S. Senate seat to the highest bidder, and Jackson acknowledged that he was named in the criminal complaint as a potential Senate candidate.

During the trial, prosecutors said the state's former international trade director told them Jackson was at a meeting where a businessman discussed fundraising for Blagojevich and Jackson's desire for the seat. Also, Blagojevich's brother, Robert, testified that the same businessman had offered to raise up to \$6 million in exchange for Jackson's appointment.

Jackson hasn't been charged and has denied wrongdoing. But political experts say his political future could hinge on the outcome of Blagojevich's corruption retrial in April. The

former governor, who denied wrongdoing, was convicted earlier this year on one count of lying to the FBI.

Asked if he was worried about the political fallout of the retrial, he said, "Preparing a case against Blagojevich is not a case against me."

"I entered public life to provide people with jobs. I have not deviated from that mission one day in 15 years," he said. "The people of my district have responded by re-electing me."

When asked if he'll seek higher office, Jackson said, "I'm honored to be in public service." Earlier this year, after Jackson's name surfaced as a possible contender to replace the retiring Mayor Richard M. Daley, the Chicago Sun-Times reported that a businessman, who mentioned the \$6 million, told the FBI that Jackson asked him to buy plane tickets for a woman to visit Jackson. Both Jackson and his wife, Chicago Alderman Sandi Jackson, acknowledged Jackson's relationship with the woman.

"It was an immensely personal matter for us, which my wife and I handled in the privacy of our home," the congressman told AP. "We've



accepted responsibility of being public people that there are elements of my life that play out in public. I'm grateful for a loving wife and loving family." The impact of the "social acquaintance" and Blagojevich connections were undeniable on the campaign

trail this year. Even though Jackson easily won the largely black and mainly Democratic district, his Republican challenger who made the Jackson scandals the center of his campaign got attention for the first time in recent memory. □

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Citing police abuse, Hispanics leaving Conn. Town



EAST HAVEN, Conn. — Santiago Malave has worked law enforcement jobs in Connecticut for more than four decades, but as a Puerto Rican, he says he cannot drive through his own town without worrying about police harassing him.

Malave, a probation officer who works in New Haven, says the racial abuse is so bad that he only crosses the town line into East Haven to go home. He and his wife are now preparing to sell their house and move, joining an exodus of Hispanics who say police have hassled them with traffic stops, false arrests and even jailhouse beatings.

The Justice Department has started a civil rights investigation, and the FBI recently opened a criminal probe. But that has not changed things on Main

Street, where restaurants and stores that cater to Hispanics are going out of business.

If the goal of police was to ruin East Haven's Hispanic community, some grudgingly say they have succeeded.

"We can't tolerate the town anymore," said Malave, 64. "For us to leave our beautiful home is something that hurts, but we can't deal with these people." Racial profiling allegations began swirling about two years ago in East Haven, a predominantly Italian-American seaside suburb of about 28,000 people 70 miles northeast of New York City. Hispanics make up only about 7 percent of the population, but their numbers had been growing as the peaceful, small-town setting and thriving businesses attracted newcomers from Mexico and Ecuador.

Police Chief Leonard Gallo, who is on administrative leave, has denied the allegations. The office of acting Police Chief Gaetano Nappi referred calls to Town Attorney Patricia Cofrancesco, who did not respond to phone messages seeking comment.

Hispanic business owners say police made a practice of parking outside their shops and stopping any Latinos. Some who complained say they faced retaliation.

Luis Rodriguez, an immigrant from Ecuador who owns the Los Amigos Grocery, said he was arrested two months ago and jailed for five days after a woman pointed out to police that his 3-year-old son was unsupervised on the sidewalk outside the store. He said police were out for revenge because his wife had been videotaping them. He was charged with child neglect; the case is still pending.

Meanwhile, his store is up for sale. Ecuadoreans used to travel from as far as Massachusetts for jalapenos, Ecuadorean sodas and other specialty products. But Rodriguez said police have scared customers away by threatening to alert immigration authorities if they ever saw them in town again.

"If I had known the police in East Haven are so much trouble I never would have

invested so much money here," said Rodriguez, 41, who has put more than \$120,000 into the store.

The Justice Department's civil rights branch began investigating the police force in September 2009. It is still looking into alleged discriminatory policing, but it identified preliminary concerns in April over issues including outdated policies and a lack of clear guidance on the use of force.

The town's mayor, April Capone, revealed this month that the FBI was gathering evidence for potential criminal prosecutions of some of the officers. Her office declined to comment. Dermot Lynch, a student intern with Yale Law School's Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic, said the problem goes beyond a few rogue officers.

"This is a systemwide leadership failure. It's going to need widespread reform," said Lynch, whose group filed a lawsuit in October on behalf of nine immigrants who say East Haven police abused them with beatings and unwarranted use of a stun gun. It also quotes officers using ethnic slurs.

Until recently, East Haven was considered a refuge by Hispanics, a suburb with ample parking and less crime

than New Haven.

Malave, who has lived here since 1977, said he never had problems before late 2008 when police responded to a report by his wife that some money was missing. The couple had begun to argue. Malave, who was asked his nationality, said police arrested him for disorderly conduct the minute he said he was born in Puerto Rico.

"I tried to talk to the sergeant, but he said, 'You spics don't have rights here,'" said Malave, a former New Haven police officer.

Hispanics in East Haven say more than half their population estimated at 1,900 by the Census Bureau has moved away.

Mario Marin, who was at work one recent afternoon in his family's empty restaurant, La Bamba, said two of his siblings moved to nearby Waterbury and another brother returned to Ecuador. He said one brother, like other Hispanic property owners, lost a house to foreclosure after his tenants moved away.

"They destroyed our future here," Marin said of police. He said even out-of-town diners have stopped coming since officers launched raids on the restaurant's parking lot, towing away any cars with out-of-state license plates. □



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First National Bird Count on March 18, 2011



Minister Michele Hooyboer-Winklaar, Cultural Affairs

ORANJESTAD - For the first time foundation Aruba Birdlife Conservation in cooperation with the Taskforce Boa constrictor is organizing a national bird count in which everybody who lives on Aruba can participate. At first, the birdcount was intended to be held on Christmas day, but a better idea was brought forward. It was suggested to hold the national birdcount on March 18, the day on which Aruba celebrates its

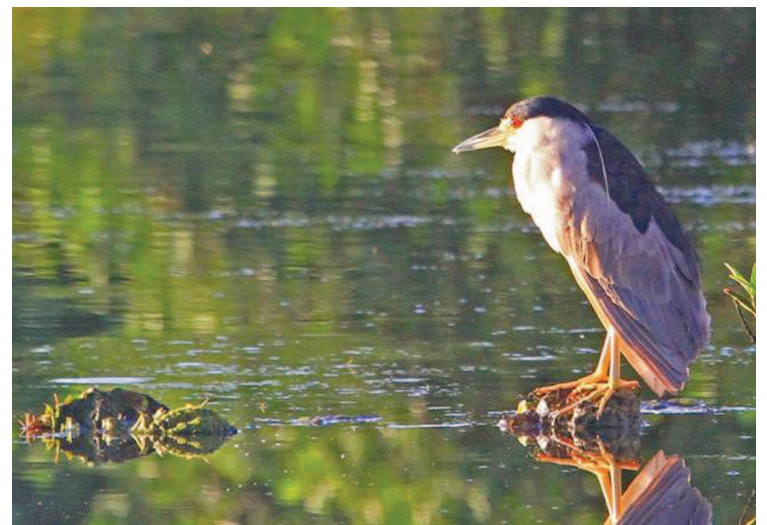


National Flag and Anthem. The birdcount could be added to the agenda of cultural events planned for Aruba's National day and as such henceforth become an annual event. The Minister responsible for Cultural Affairs, Minister Michele Hooyboer-Winklaar, who is responsible for the event planning of March 18 has informed Aruba Birdlife Conservation that she

would gladly support such an important activity being added to the program of Aruba's National Day. The event will take place first thing in the morning and will last for 15 minutes. Citizens of Aruba are requested to participate by choosing a certain location, preferably in their gardens or in the vicinity thereof and count the birds they spot within the 15-minute window of opportunity. A special form is being designed for this purpose and the logistics of attaining and returning the forms to the organization is being

worked out. The data of the findings will be made public. More information about the national birdcount will be published in January. The most important reason for the national birdcount is its use as a monitoring device of Aruba's birdlife, which at present is under pressure of the invasive boa constrictor.

At present a conservative estimation has revealed that no less than 17.000 birds will be consumed in 2010 by the boa. An Aruba without shoco, prikichi, patrishi and trupial is not an option. □

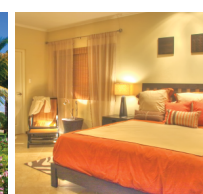


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Employees of Stichting Gehandicaptten celebrate Christmas @ Casa Tua Barcelona



Beautifully dressed and happy staff members from Stichting Gehandicaptten Aruba arrived at Casa Tua Barcelona to be treated to a wonderful Christmas lunch.

A wide variety of food like Ham 'di Pasco', Paella and local dishes were prepared for the staff of Stichting Gehandicaptten Aruba. While enjoying great company and



good food, Angela Croes sang lovely Christmas Carols and some employees even sang with her. The ambiance was great and to top off the lunch, a motivating speech was given

by the Director of the Stichting for which he received a great round of applause. With the raffle the employees were surprised with lovely Christmas gifts. □



Chevrolet Toys for Joy Redefines the Spirit of Christmas

ORANJESTAD -- When Chevrolet Toys for Joy announced the annual campaign, it got the community involved. More than 500 gifts were purchased in the span of 30 days, toys destined to brighten up the holidays for kids of lesser means. In return generous toy-buyers were rewarded with a raffle ticket to participate in a car give-away, courtesy of GM Corporate and Stern Aruba.

The toy collection, unfolded November 18 to December 18, and did not confine itself to just toy stores. It also broadened its reach, participating in local events, coming to the attention of a larger circle of people, and receiving a community-wide support.

Fransisca van Esta Tjallingii was moved to action by the campaign when she participated in a local event, where she purchased a new toy, and received a raffle ticket. Much to her surprise her number came up and as she was announced the winner of

a brand new Chevrolet Spark 2011, while still on stage to claim her prize, she declared she will be donating the prize to a good friend, a single mother whose own vehicle had just recently suffered a breakdown, resulting in much anguish and hardship for the family.

Alas, that generous gesture had to be denied due to technicalities, as the company was unable to deliver the car to the winner.

And that's where the story takes on added meaning, and what seems to be divine intervention. At the end of the campaign, on December 18th, when GM Corporate and Stern Aruba drew a 1st place winner for the Chevrolet Sparks 2011, Fransisca's name came up again, and this time the win stuck, and she was able to fulfill her wish, and award the car she promised, to her friend-in-need.

David Theysen, comments on behalf of GM Corporate and Stern Aruba, that the story behind Chevrolet's Toys for Joy campaign proves that a



good idea, when transformed into a generous deed, catches on fire, and spreads more goodness around the world, transcending that act into a universal force with inspirational powers.

Fransisca won the car twice, by virtue of giving it away,

redefining the generous spirit of Christmas, Theysen states.

As the campaign culminated Elsie Toppenberg, 2nd prize winner, got an iPad, Herbert Croes, 3rd prize winner received an iPod touch, and over 500 new toys went to local not-for-profit organizations

such as FEPO, Fundacion pa Nos Comunidad, Skol Paso Pa Futuro, Fundacion Hende Muhe den Dificultad, Imeldahof, Casa Cuna and some local church help initiatives, determined to multiply smiles this holiday season. □

Palm Beach boasts authentic Mediterranean cuisine



By ARUBA TODAY

PALM BEACH -- When we say Mediterranean cuisine, we mean the food from the adjacent nation-states sharing the shores of the Mediterranean, embracing many cultures and influenced by varied customs.

At Casa Tua Mediterranea, the menu offers a trip around that sunshiny, lively part of the world, without ever having to buy an airline ticket, starting at the Atlantic and traveling traverse Europe to Turkey, on to the Middle East and North Africa.

We discovered that the chefs choose the best, most delicious dishes from France, Italy, Greece, and Tunisia, and paired them with most famous Middle-Eastern appetizers and salads to present a formidable culinary trip around the Mediterranean Sea, enjoyed in the contemporary indoor dining room which includes a cozy lounge area or on the dining terrace overlooking the action at the new bustling Palm Beach Plaza.

Spanokopitakia, brick oven baked filo pastries filled with Greek cheese and spinach, famous Tzaziki, a yogurt and cucumber dip, and popular Babaganoush and Hummus, with authentic pita bread, are some of

the most popular appetizers.

For main courses our traditional Moussaka is justly called, the best you will ever have, and the genuine Tunisian Couscous, loaded with merguez, chicken and lamb, is rivaled only by the Tenderloin, Lamb and Chicken kebabs. Casa Tua pays homage to provincial



cooking with our Grilled Whole Red Snapper, flavored with herbs de Provence, and our Mussels, taste the way they're served in the port of Marseille. Our thin crust Italian Pizza, needs no introduction, as it has earned a huge following in both the other restaurants, Casa Tua Pizzeria and Casa Tua Barcelona.

To top off the authentic Mediterranean feast, the Oriental belly dancers entertain every night and you may complement the exotic evening with a flavored hookah pipe and endless new st le cocktails featuring Strawberry Field Mojito, and Bubble Royal Champagne Martin.

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Legal Eagles enjoy dinner at El Gaucho



Oranjestad -- The Law office of Dr van Leeuwen hosted a pre-holiday dinner at El Gaucho featuring the restaurant's award winning cuisine and warm hospitality. Office colleagues raised their glass in honor of the past months and in anticipation of what the future may bring, feasting over plentiful platters of signature El Gaucho specialties. □



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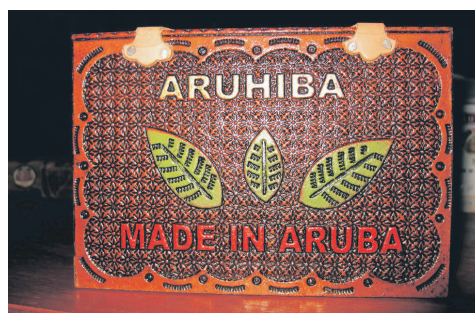
ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi has always



had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The process took ten years. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar box is specially designed for the cigars with the logo "Aruhiba". Petrocchi considers Aruhiba a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells International cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba Corona with five



cigars and you will get 1 FREE cigar of \$35. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill. Open from Monday to Saturday from 9am till 8:30pm. And open on Sunday from 9am to 1pm. At the Tamarijn Hotel open on Monday till Saturday 12pm to 8pm. And on Sunday from 9am to 1pm. Aruhiba is only available in above mentioned stores. Visit our authentic tobacco farm where cigars are handmade.



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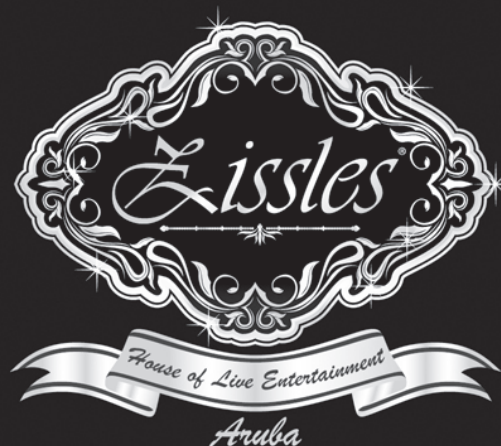
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Could Acacia trees solve Africa's hunger problems?

By Fred Bahnson

Danielle Nierenberg

Washington – Faith-based aid groups in Africa have a long and mostly admirable history of working to alleviate hunger. Too often, however, faith groups have focused their relief solely on food aid and have stopped short of addressing hunger's underlying causes. While doling out sacks of Nebraska wheat during famines or giving farmers yearly gifts of petro-fertilizers and “miracle” seeds may alleviate hunger in the short term, such “aid” merely perpetuates a downward cycle and does nothing to improve the long-term resiliency of the land.

Today, a growing number of churches and Christian development organizations with long tenures in Africa are gaining attention with approaches to hunger that are more holistic, ones that look for answers from African farmers and from the land itself.

A first step for the global poor – shatter six myths Peter Cunningham, an Australian agricultural missionary who worked for the past nine years with Serving in Mission in Niger, is well aware of approaches to hunger that do not work. “There have been countless project interventions and millions of dollars spent in Niger over the last 30 years,” he says, “all aimed at reducing poverty, all with little or no lasting benefits at the village farm level. Adoption has not continued when the project ended or left.”

Band-aid approach isn't working Mr. Cunningham is frustrated by aid organizations, both faith-based and NGOs, who continue to offer a band-aid approach, handing out food aid but doing little to change the underlying conditions of poverty. Why not put that money and energy into solving the region's agricultural problems? The agronomic answers are out there, Cunningham believes, but they will not be found by using genetically modified “miracle” seeds, petro-fertilizers, pesticides, and other so-called Green Revolution practices. Rather, they must start with agroecological and organic farming practices.

Using what he learned from Niger farmers, Cunningham sought an agroecological approach that would be both regionally adapted and culturally specific. That meant starting with the Sahel's original ecosystem. “In zones where God created the ecosystem as a savannah – trees, grasses, and herbs – then we should follow that pattern with trees. If large areas of productive land once had trees and were cleared, then we should go back to having trees with annual crops inter-planted between them,” Cunningham told me. □

Happiness 101: Less tweeting, more meeting

By Michael Serota

Washington – On my Metro ride to and from work each day, I watch as hundreds of faces filled with contemplation, frustration, and annoyance look past one another. Although it is mildly entertaining to see the lengths to which some will go to avoid making eye contact – or worse yet, engage in actual conversation – it is also sadly ironic. The human contact that these commuters take such pains to avoid might also reduce the emotional baggage they carry.

In a world dominated by tweets and instant messages, meaningful conversation seems to be dwindling – and, as studies suggest, our happiness with it. But we're suffering unnecessarily. Psychologists have found that happiness is positively linked to social connections that are substantial, not superficial. At a time when resources are scarce, we need to tap into a resource we already have in abundance: ourselves. In these challenging times, there is much to worry about. Unemployment is staggering, and those who are employed lack certainty about their job security. Anxiety about paying mortgages or rent and raising and educating children is overwhelming for many. Politicians' increasingly common half-truths and pundits' oversimplifications – perpetuated by the media – continue to fuel the polarization and vitriol poisoning American political discourse. People feel confused, angry, and scared. But many are forced to bear these burdens on their own because they lack the outlets that would allow them to engage in meaningful discussion about them.

How bankruptcy proof are you? Find your color. The gulf between us And thus, cityscapes such as my daily commute are filled with strained faces with similar problems – people sitting inches away from each other but with a chasm of silence between them. Their behavior, of course, is encouraged by our societal norms. It simply isn't acceptable to engage in meaningful conversations with the strangers around you. But it should be. Strangers can provide an unexpected forum for meaningful interaction—a place to share our thoughts, vent our fears, and even sort through some of the bigger questions in life. Unfortunately, though, it seems that our society's technological overdrive only encourages the gulf between us to grow.

Apple rolls out iTunes 10, new iPod Nano, and Apple TV

During the late 1990s, I witnessed first-hand how the shift toward electronic communications led to a decrease in meaningful interpersonal interactions in my own life and the lives of my friends, leading to a sense of alienation and unhappiness. Even though we communicated frequently by email or instant message, our digital communications were often shallow, and slowly began to supplant the meaningful conversations we had previously enjoyed.

Talking to strangers Midway through college, the psychology major in me began to push back against this trend by devoting some portion of each day to interacting with new people – that is, talking to strangers. Sitting at a coffee shop or standing in line at the grocery store, I began attempting to engage every willing and interested participant in some form of a

meaningful conversation.

Over time, I developed a special routine. After proceeding past the requisite introductions and establishing a comfortable rapport, I would pose the following three questions: 1) What's on your mind? 2) What are the biggest challenges you are facing in your life? 3) What would you like to change in your life and/or in the world?

The top five dream jobs: What's yours?

Top 5 most stressful jobs

Although many strangers I encountered were hesitant to engage in the initial interaction, once they overcame their uncertainty, most welcomed the opportunity to discuss these questions. I discovered that the people I interacted with had a surprising amount they wanted to get off their chests, and were demonstrably happy about doing so. Of course, the topics of conversation were not always uplifting. I heard my fair share of heartbreaking stories and struggles, but they were always sincere and authentic. And in return, I received invaluable advice and guidance, and every once in a while, made a new friend. Most importantly, however, I came to see the intrinsic value in pursuing these fulfilling interactions.

Less small talk, more real talk A recent study by four psychologists, entitled “Eavesdropping on Happiness: Well-Being is Related to Having Less Small Talk and More Substantive Conversations,” provides an empirical basis for the proposition that meaningful social interactions correlate with happiness. In the study, researchers monitored the conversations of a group of college students over a four-day period. They found that the happiest participants engaged in twice as many meaningful conversations and less “small talk” than the less happy participants. Based on the study's findings, the researchers concluded that the “happy life is social rather than solitary, and conversationally deep rather than superficial.”

This research provides at least one explanation for why people still feel alone, isolated, and unhappy notwithstanding the fact that they regularly converse with others via email, instant messaging, text messaging, Twitter, and Facebook. When it comes to social interactions, it appears as though happiness is not a question of quantity, but one of quality. Despite this, however, each electronic innovation seems to be moving us further away from quality interactions. Indeed, with tweets and text messaging, our thoughts are reduced to mere blips on a page.

The top words and phrases of 2010

But twenty 140-character tweets cannot replace a twenty-minute real-time conversation. Moreover, as my own experiences talking with strangers demonstrate, people are more open to engaging in meaningful interactions and making new friends than one might otherwise think. Our online interactions may be here to stay, but with a little eye contact and a warm smile, the daily commute could capitalize on our most precious resource – each other.

Michael Serota is a recent graduate of the UC Berkeley School of Law. He lives in Washington, DC, where he works as a federal law clerk and teaches a class on law and ethics through Georgetown Law School's Street Law Clinic. □

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Co-authored by Aruba's
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Ivory Coast general strike called to oust Gbagbo

MARCO CHOWN OVED

Associated Press

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Allies of the man who the international community says won Ivory Coast's disputed presidential election called Sunday for a general strike that would last until the incumbent hanging on to power concedes defeat and leaves office.

It was the latest form of pressure to force Laurent Gbagbo from the presidency nearly a month after the United Nations said his political rival, Alassane Ouattara, won the runoff vote. Gbagbo has refused to leave despite international calls for his ouster, and West African leaders say they now will remove him by force if he fails to go.

In an interview with Associated Press Television News on Sunday, Gbagbo said he was not concerned about world opinion, insisting he was duly elected. He said of his detractors: "Maybe they do not want me, I admit it, but I am not looking to be loved by them. I respect and abide by the Ivorians' vote."

Djedje Mady, the head of Ouattara's electoral coalition, said it called on "all Ivorians and those who live in Ivory Coast and believe in peace and justice to cease all their activities on Monday, December 27, 2010, until Laurent Gbagbo leaves power."

The U.N. has said at least 173 people have been killed in violence over the vote, heightening fears that the country once divided in two could return to civil war. The toll is believed to be much higher, though, as the U.N. mission has been blocked from investigating other

reports including an allegation of a mass grave.

On Sunday, the interior minister appointed by Gbagbo accused the U.N. of only telling half the story. Emile Guirieoulou said that at least 36 of the victims were police or other security forces who "were targeted by gunfire coming from the protesters." Guirieoulou also alleged that the thousands of refugees arriving in Liberia had fled violence perpetrated by rebels who support Ouattara. The U.N. refugee agency says at least 14,000 people have fled the violence and political chaos in Ivory Coast, some walking for up to four days with little food to reach neighboring Liberia. At least one child drowned while trying to cross a river.

Gbagbo has been in power since 2000 and had already overstayed his mandate by five years when the long-delayed presidential election was finally held in October. The vote was intended to help reunify the country, which



U.N. forces drive past a billboard for President Laurent Gbagbo in, Ivory Coast, Abidjan Thursday, Dec. 23, 2010. The United Nations said Thursday that at least 173 people have been killed and dozens of others have gone missing or been tortured following Ivory Coast's disputed presidential election, which has prompted fears of a return to civil war.

was divided by the 2002-2003 civil war into a rebel-controlled north and a loyalist south.

Instead, the election has renewed divisions that threaten to plunge the country back into civil war. While

Ivory Coast was officially reunited in a 2007 peace deal, Ouattara still draws his support from the northern half of the country, where residents feel they are often treated as foreigners within their own country by southerners.

The U.N. certified Ouattara as the winner of the Nov. 28 runoff vote, but a Gbagbo ally overturned those results by throwing out half a million ballots from Ouattara strongholds in the north. □

Associated Press



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Israeli foreign minister: peace is 'impossible'



In this Jan. 16, 2008 file photo, Avigdor Lieberman, then Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs, talks during a news conference at the Knesset, Israel's parliament in Jerusalem.

DANIEL ESTRIN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP)

Israel's foreign minister said Sunday a peace deal with the Palestinians is impossible

Associated Press

under current conditions and that Israel should pursue a lesser deal instead — a concept the Palestinians swiftly rejected.

The latest diplomatic spat between the two sides came as violence along the Israel-Gaza border simmered.

After days of accelerated Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel and Israeli airstrikes in response, Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinians on the border early Sunday.

Avigdor Lieberman, the Israeli foreign minister, told a conference of Israeli diplomats that instead of a full peace deal, Israel should seek a long-term, interim agreement on security and economic matters. Palestinians have consistently rejected that approach.

"It's not only that it is impossible" to reach an overall agreement, he said. "It is simply forbidden."

Lieberman said the West Bank Palestinian Authority — with whom Israel has pledged to negotiate — is "not legitimate" because it has postponed elections. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas remains in office though his

term expired almost a year ago, and there is no date for a new election.

Lieberman is known for expressing hard-line views that don't always represent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who says he seeks a negotiated, final peace deal with the Palestinians but has declined to give specifics.

A statement from Netanyahu's office said Lieberman's comments reflect "his personal positions," not those of the government.

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority broke down in September after an Israeli freeze on settlement construction expired.

The Palestinians say they will not negotiate as long as Israel builds homes for Jews in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, lands the Palestinians claim for a future state.

U.S. mediators have returned to indirect talks to seek a way out of the impasse.

Palestinian Authority spokesman Ghassan Khatib rejected Lieberman's comments, saying most world governments — including Israel's — recognize the Palestinian Authority as

legitimate. He said the Palestinians would not accept an interim agreement.

"It's too late now for anything except ending the occupation and allowing for two states on the '67 borders," he said, referring to 1949 truce lines that marked the West Bank until the 1967 Mideast war, when Israel captured the territory.

Israeli Cabinet Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer warned Sunday that if peace talks fail, "the whole world" is likely to recognize a sovereign Palestinian state — a development Israel would not welcome.

"Within a year, we will find ourselves in a situation where the whole world — and I wouldn't be surprised if even the United States — would support a Palestinian state," he said.

Violence again hit Israel's border with the Gaza Strip Sunday, threatening a de-facto two year truce.

The Israeli military said it launched an airstrike after spotting two men trying to plant explosives along the border. □



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8 American tourists killed in a bus crash in Egypt



Unidentified Egyptian men observe the remains of a tour bus that crashed into a truck on the 115 mile journey from Aswan to the ancient temples of Abu Simbel, near Aswan in Egypt Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

SALAH NASRAWI

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A tour bus slammed into a truck in southern Egypt on Sunday, killing eight Americans and injuring 21 others in the latest

fatal crash involving tourists, the state news agency said.

The bus was taking a tour group on the 115 mile journey from Aswan to the ancient temples of Abu Simbel along Lake Nasser, when it ran into

the truck carrying sand parked on the side of a single lane desert road, killing six women and two men.

The Egyptian driver and a guide were also injured in the accident.

Egyptian security officials said the hurt Americans were first transferred to a military hospital for treatment and then 10 of the injured, including two Egyptians, were airlifted to a hospital in Cairo.

An official of Misr Sinai Tours, which was running the bus service, said the accident occurred around dawn while it was still dark about 13 miles outside of Aswan.

The official said the bus, containing 37 passengers, was part of a larger tour of 116 American tourists traveling in three buses. □

N. Korea troops boast of artillery attacks on S. Korea

HYUNG-JIN KIM,

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean soldiers boasted on state television they bombarded a front-line South Korean island with artillery last month as immediate retaliation after the South fired first.

The two Koreas have ramped up their rhetoric since the Nov. 23 attack killed four South Koreans on Yeonpyeong Island near their tense western sea border. North Korea has said it fired after South Korean shells landed in its waters, while the South has said its routine firing drill aimed away from the sea frontier and should not have provoked an attack.

North Korea's war of words intensified around Friday's 19th anniversary of leader Kim Jong Il's appointment as the North's supreme military commander. Kim's military chief threatened last week to launch a "sacred" nuclear war against the South.

On Friday, North Korean soldiers appeared on a state TV program marking Kim's appointment anniversary and bragged of participating in the

artillery barrage.

"Our eyes were full of fire right after we saw the enemy's shells being fired into our sacred waters," soldier Kim Moon Chol said, clinching his fists and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with three uniformed colleagues. Their ranks were unknown.

"At the order of 'fire,' we poured our merciless thunderbolt of fire at the enemy," he said in a loud, oratory-style speech.

A soldier whose uniform was full of military decorations expressed his loyalty to Kim Jong Il.

"Facing the enemy's provocation, we shouted, 'Let's dedicate our lives to fighting the enemy and giving them a merciless death for our dear leader and supreme military commander,'" Kim Kyong Su said.

Their speeches constantly drew applause from the audience — mostly uniformed soldiers who spoke separately and vowed to get tougher with South Korea. They all later sang a military song together. South Korea has staged a series of military drills — including one on Yeonpyeong

Island on Dec. 20 — in a show of force against the North. The South's President Lee Myung-bak, during a visit to front-line troops Thursday, said that South Korea must make "unsparing" retaliation if it suffers another surprise attack. South Korea plans new routine naval firing exercises starting Monday, but not on Yeonpyeong and other border islands, according to the Defense Ministry.

The North's state media said Sunday that the South's Dec. 20 drills on Yeonpyeong showed its intention to fight North Korea to the end. "The warmongers should not misjudge the patience of" North Korea, the main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a commentary carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

The state-run Institute for National Security Strategy in Seoul said in a report issued Sunday that the North may even directly invade Yeonpyeong and other Yellow Sea border islands next year, Yonhap news agency reported. Yonhap said the assessment linked the North's belligerence to leader Kim's



A South Korean border guard patrols the fence-line covered with a camouflage net at the Imjingak Pavilion near the border village of Panmunjom in Paju, South Korea, Friday, Dec. 24, 2010. One month after a deadly exchange of artillery fire, the two Koreas ramped up their rhetoric, with South Korea's president pledging unsparing retaliation if attacked again and a top North Korean official threatening a 'sacred' nuclear war if provoked.

Associated Press

moves to transfer power to his youngest son, but the report didn't elaborate.

Calls to the institute were unanswered Sunday.

A report released Thursday by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group said that Korea's disputed maritime boundary and the volatility of North Korea's internal politics have "created a serious risk that any further provocation might turn into a wider conflict." South Korea's

Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security also said in a report last week that Pyongyang could be planning its third nuclear test next year. Despite high tension, analyst Paik Hak-soon at the private Sejong Institute think tank near Seoul said North Korea probably won't provoke the South again ahead of a planned summit between President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao on Jan. 19. □

Chavez bids critical farewell to adversary Carlos Andres Perez

IAN JAMES

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Sunday offered condolences after the death of former President Carlos Andres Perez, but also said he hopes his longtime adversary's style of governing never again returns to the South America country.

The 88-year-old Perez died in Miami on Saturday. Chavez, who led a failed coup attempt against him in 1992, said Perez's family has a right to bring his body to Venezuela for burial if they wish — though the family said his funeral will be in Miami.

"May he rest in peace. But with him... may the form of politics that he personified rest in peace and leave here

forever," Chavez said in a televised speech in western Venezuela, accompanied by Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Chavez said Perez — who governed Venezuela from 1974-79 and again from 1989-93 — led governments that violated citizens' rights and were subservient to U.S. interest. "We send his relatives our regrets, our regrets, and our wish that that old, egotistical.. way of doing politics never again returns to Venezuela," Chavez said.

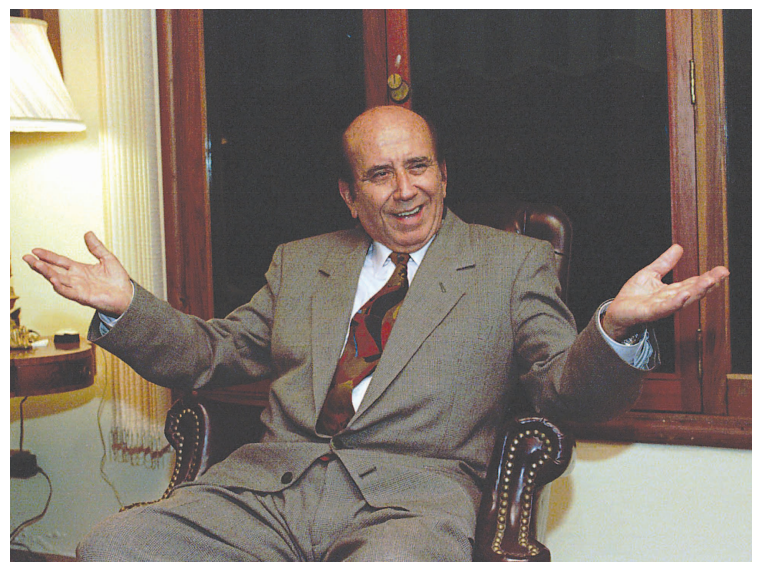
He said a relative of Perez had asked someone close to the Venezuelan government for permission to fly the body to Venezuela for burial, and Chavez said "they have every right."

But relatives in Miami said

they have no intention of returning his remains to Venezuela until Chavez is no longer in office. They said Perez is to be buried in Miami on Wednesday following a wake on Tuesday.

Perez's daughter, Maria Francia Perez, said neither she nor her sister Cecilia had contacted the Venezuelan government, and that her father "was never in agreement with returning with antidemocratic governments like the current one" in power.

Perez lived out his final years in Miami while Chavez's government demanded he be turned over to stand trial for his role in quelling bloody 1989 riots in Caracas. Perez denied wrongdoing and accused the Supreme Court earlier this year of doing Chavez's



In this Sept. 11, 1996 file photo, former Venezuela's President Carlos Andres Perez gestures during an interview at his home in Caracas, Venezuela. Perez died on Saturday, Dec. 25, 2010, in Miami of a heart attack, his daughter Maria Francia Perez said.

bidding after it approved plans for an extradition request.

Other Latin American leaders, meanwhile, praised Perez after his family announced he had died of respiratory failure at a Miami area hospital.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said in a statement that he had a great

personal relationship with Perez, expressing condolences to his family and describing Perez as a "statesman."

Peruvian President Alan Garcia told reporters in Lima that "like any politician, he was a man often argued about," but that "he was very democratic." □

Petraeus commends Pakistan's counterinsurgency

ELENA BECATOROS

Associated Press

Afghanistan (AP) — The top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan said there will be more coordinated military operations on either side of the border with Pakistan, and commended the Pakistanis on its “impressive” counterinsurgency efforts. The Taliban in Afghanistan and other extremist groups use safe havens across the border in Pakistan, and the U.S. has been pushing Islamabad to clear the lawless tribal belt that runs along the frontier. The pressure has often strained U.S.-Pakistani relations, with Islamabad bristling at suggestions it should do more. Gen. David Petraeus, who took over command of coalition troops in Afghanistan in July, told The Associated Press there had already been coordinated operations on both sides of the border. “We want to do more hammer and anvil operations,” Petraeus said late Saturday, in an interview aboard a military transport aircraft as he flew around Afghanistan on Christmas visits.

Pakistan recognized “the need to do more to solidify their gains in (Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas), and we are going to coordinate with them to help their operations,” he said. But the general insisted that Pakistan’s efforts at combating the various militant groups active in the country must be commended. “We have to be very clear in recognizing what Pakistan has done over the course of the last 22 months, which is quite considerable. They’ve conducted impressive counterinsurgency operations” in several regions, including the Swat Valley, the North West Frontier Province and the tribal regions, Petraeus said.

In the latest militant strike against the Pakistani authorities’ control over a key northwest tribal region bordering Afghanistan, a female suicide bomber killed 45 people and wounded scores more outside a World Food Program depot on Saturday. Petraeus insisted that gains already made must be solidified before Pakistan



Gen. David Petraeus, 2nd left, top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, is greeted by Brig. Gen. Skip Davis on his arrival at an Italian base in Farah, Afghanistan, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2010. The top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan crisscrossed the country on Saturday, visiting coalition troops on Christmas at some of the main battle fronts in a show of appreciation and support in the tenth year of the war against the Taliban.

expands its operations to other areas — such as troubled North Waziristan.

“They recognize the need to finish some of the operations they’ve already conducted before launching significant new ones,” the general said, sitting at the desk of an office

set up inside the military plane, laptops keeping him connected to operations across the country.

The Pakistani military has stepped up operations against Islamic extremist groups it considers a threat to its own security — notably the Pakistani Taliban. But it has resisted pressure to move against extremists in North Waziristan, which is also home to the al-Qaida-linked Haqqani network.

Forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan “have conducted very close coordination in the past two months in particular,” the general said, adding that he meets regularly with Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani.

“All participants recognize the need to do more against some of those elements that are undermining security in Afghanistan,” he said.

Much of the fiercest fighting in Afghanistan has been concentrated in the Taliban’s traditional southern strongholds. An internal review of President Barack Obama’s year-old war strategy released recently noted progress against the Taliban in the south, where the U.S. deployed an additional 30,000 American troops this year. The insurgents have been showing their reach,

increasing attacks in other parts of the country through the year. Residents say parts of the north that were once quiet are now under Taliban control, with Afghan security forces often confined to their compounds.

“Over the last two years there has been an increase in Taliban activity up in the north,” Petraeus acknowledged, but said there were plans by the Interior Ministry, the Afghan army and NATO “to reverse the momentum that the Taliban achieved in the north.”

The U.S. had also sent an infantry brigade, an aviation brigade and additional special forces to the north over the past six to 10 months, Petraeus said, adding that Germany — which commands NATO troops in the north — had also conducted “impressive counterinsurgency operations, actually the first in their post-World War II history.”

Reversing the Taliban momentum in the north could be done while maintaining pressure on insurgents the southern provinces, he said. But crucial to the Afghan campaign was being able to establish strong local governance, he stressed. The U.S. has said it will begin drawing down its forces next year, with eventual handover to Afghan forces in 2014. □

Dutch clear 5 of 12 detained Somalis of terrorism

ARTHUR MAX

Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — Dutch authorities on Sunday cleared five of the 12 Somali men who were detained Christmas Eve on suspicion of preparing a terrorist attack in the Netherlands.

Prosecutors said they had no evidence of criminal involvement against the five men, but the investigation of the other seven was continuing. They must decide by Tuesday whether to bring the remaining suspects before a judge or let them go.

The men were picked up in Rotterdam after a tip from intelligence services that an attack may be imminent. There was no information on the alleged target, although

Rotterdam is one of Europe’s biggest commercial hubs with a huge port and large oil and gas storage facilities. Three of the detainees who had no valid residency permits were turned over to immigration police, prosecutors said. Two of them were residents of Denmark and the residency of the third was not established. Two Dutch residents were released. On Friday, police raided an internet cafe, four homes and two motel rooms but found no weapons or explosives. Authorities said they cannot know for sure if they prevented a terrorist assault, but they did not want to take any risks. “What we did is take away the threat that was formed by these people,” prosecutor Gerrit van der Burg said Saturday on



A view of the Banadir Internet cafe in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

Associated Press

national television. The weekend action was not enough to raise the general threat level set by the National Terrorism Coordinator, which remained at “limited.” Authorities believe the Netherlands could be targeted by Islamic radicals because of the high-profile anti-Islam campaign by one of the country’s most popular politicians, Geert Wilders. □

Patriots clinch AFC home-field edge

New York Jets running back Shonn Greene (23) celebrates, after rushing for a touchdown, with teammates Brandon Moore (65) and Matt Slauson (68) in the first half an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears in Chicago, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

Associated Press
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SPORTS Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel: 582-7800 Monday, December 27, 2010



This Sept. 10, 2010, filoe photo shows USA's Diana Taurasi driving to the basket while guarded by Australia's Laura Summerton, left, during the second half of an exhibition basketball game, in Hartford, Conn.

Associated Press

Federation: Taurasi tests positive for modafinil

DOUG FEINBERG

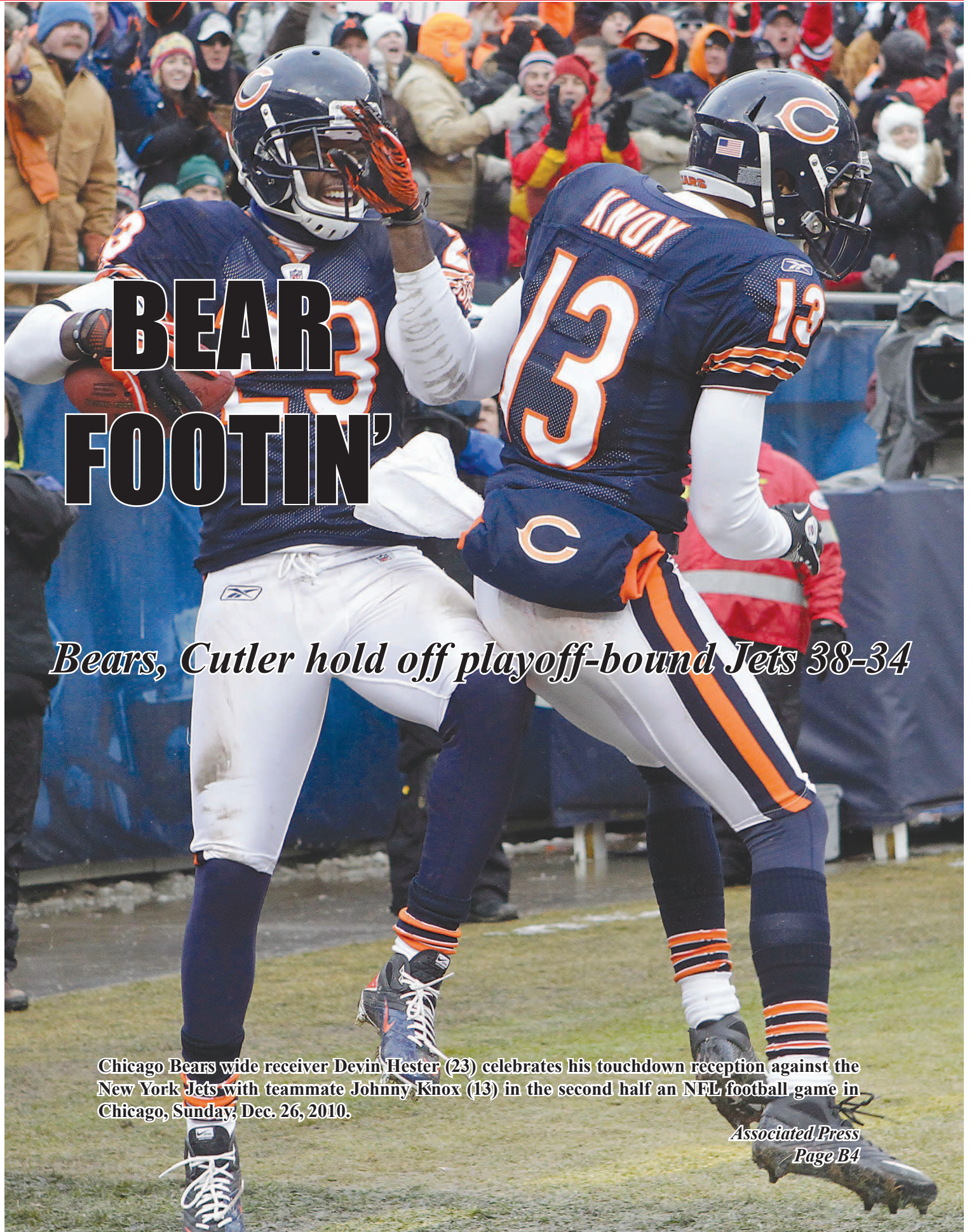
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Basketball great Diana Taurasi tested positive for modafinil while playing in a professional women's league in Turkey, the country's federation said Friday.

Neither her lawyer nor her team, Fenerbahce, would confirm that Taurasi tested positive for the stimulant, which has been involved in several major doping cases, including that of U.S. sprinter Kelli White.

Modafinil is used to counter excessive sleepiness due to narcolepsy, shift-work sleep disorder or sleep apnea, according to the website for the prescription drug Provigil, which contains the substance.

Continued on Page B6



BEAR FOOTIN'

Bears, Cutler hold off playoff-bound Jets 38-34

Chicago Bears wide receiver Devin Hester (23) celebrates his touchdown reception against the New York Jets with teammate Johnny Knox (13) in the second half an NFL football game in Chicago, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

Associated Press
Page B4

Big-name sports follow the money to the Gulf

BRIAN MURPHY

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — It was hardly a marquee moment in the history of world sports. Curious crowds on a Middle Eastern beach watched events that included horse riders slicing a lemon with a sword and a cousin of croquet called woodball.

Yet there was the president of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, looking on from the VIP seats and then coming down to present some medals at the Asian Beach Games in Oman earlier this month.

If Rogge seemed out of place, he wasn't. The scene was just a sign of the times. Fans can expect more — perhaps many more — such courtesy calls to the Gulf by the stewards of international sports as the money-soaked region that once begged for attention from the IOC and others is now bursting with eager suitors.

They are emissaries along the new silk road of sports. In little more than a decade, the Gulf's wealth and boundless ambitions have lured big-name events and A-list athletes, while the region's leaders have developed a reputation as deep-pocket hosts — who are still hungry for more.

"We go to new lands," FIFA President Seth Blatter said Dec. 2 after announcing tiny Qatar's surprise selection for the 2022 World Cup.

So new that sports fans in some places had to consult a map.

Searches for Qatar on Google instantly spiked. Announcers



outside the Middle East tried to wrap their tongues around the correct pronunciation: KAT-tar or GUH-tur but definitely not Cutter.

Then critics got busy. A running theme, particularly in the runner-up bidder America, was a shrill retort: How does Qatar merit one of crown jewels of international sports?

Such comments just mean the questioner hasn't been paying attention.

The sports migration to the Gulf has been going on for years — part of a new world landscape of sports in which economic clout has shifted from Europe and North America to markets where authorities see Rafael Nadal, Tiger Woods and roaring F-1 races as something more.

In the Gulf, it's a way to matter beyond just being the world's fuel pump.

"The old thinking in the Gulf was to try to stay out of sight," said Patrick Nikolas Theros, a former U.S. ambassador to Qatar and currently president of the U.S.-Qatar business council. "Now they see sports as an effective way to make Qatar and other Gulf countries important and important to other people." The Gulf strategy to buy respectability takes other forms, such as bringing in annexes of top schools including New York University and Georgetown, and museums such as the planned Louvre and Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi and architect I.M. Pei's Museum of Islamic Art in Doha.

But sports adds some of the Gulf's favorite currencies: celebrity and splash.

The Gulf states — led by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — have elevated sports to something akin to a national cause. Their treasuries are thrown open to bankroll first-class facilities such as the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix circuit (complete with Ferrari theme park), Dubai's airport-size Meydan horse racing complex and the array of air-conditioned stadiums planned for the World Cup.

Sports councils and federations — even the most modest — hire high-priced Western PR talent to champion their cause. The latest drive: Qatar's quest for the 2015 men's handball championships. Dubai, meanwhile, is mulling a run at a far bigger prize — the 2020 Olympics. But if not Dubai, certainly another pitch for the games will come someday from the Gulf if the

current momentum remains.

Even Rogge gave a personal nudge while in Oman, saying the IOC would welcome another Olympic bid from the Middle East after Qatar's failed effort the 2016 games.

"The geography of sports is changing," said Ahmad Mohammed Al Rahoomi, international spokesman for the Dubai Sports Council, during the SportAccord gathering in April that brought together sports officials from around the world. "When people used to think of this region it was only oil. Now they are starting to think of sports."

In reality, one feeds off the other. The Gulf's staggering oil and gas wealth powers the sports boom. And the more the events shift to the booming region, the more money that's set aside to try to get more.

How's this for an expected guest list: Nadal, Roger Federer and other top men's tennis players in Abu Dhabi and Qatar's capital Doha; Asia's top soccer teams in Doha for a continentwide tournament; Lee Westwood and Phil Mickelson at the Abu Dhabi golf championships; Colin Montgomerie and Europe's other Ryder Cup champions in Bahrain; rising Kenyan marathon star Eliud Kiptanui in Dubai.

That's just the calendar for January.

A veteran sports marketer, Donal Kilalea, said the initial push to bring competitions to the region began with companies such as Emirates airline looking to raise their profile.

"They saw it as a way for

branding," said Kilalea, head of Promoseven in Dubai. "Later, the region's leaders began to pay attention. Now, it has coalesced into a priority on all sides."

But the sports parade also drags the region in some uncomfortable directions.

Opening to the sporting world also means open to Israel, which has no diplomatic ties with Gulf states and whose presence gives Arab security forces the jitters.

Last year, the UAE suffered a serious image blow when it denied a visa to Israeli tennis player Shahar Peer for the Dubai championships. This year, Peer was allowed to play, but was limited to her hotel and the courts. A special security squad also was assigned for Israel's delegation at this month's FINA short-course swimming championships in Dubai.

Being in the world spotlight also leaves deeper social issues exposed. Among them: Is local Gulf Arab culture being steamrolled in the quest for sports prestige?

It's not a new question. The Gulf's staggering growth is built on importing cheap laborers and expensive white-collar talent, creating lopsided demographics such as five foreigners for every local-born Emirati in Dubai.

But in Doha, the questions were being tossed around with new urgency even before the last bleat of the vuvuzelas to celebrate the World Cup selection. Some conservative Muslim clerics called it a sellout of Islamic values to invite the World Cup party, including the prospect of boozy "fan zones" in a capital once so sleepy that, a generation ago, the big nightspot was a Dairy Queen.

One cleric suggested Qataris consider an Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia to escape the Cup.

Then, too, there is the sensitive issue of who actually builds the sports palaces, including the \$4 billion in new World Cup arenas. Gulf nations have been under considerable pressure from rights groups to improve conditions in the labor camps housing the mostly South Asian workers who have raised the towering cities of Dubai, Doha and elsewhere. □

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Griffin, Gordon lead L.A. Clippers over Suns

LOS ANGELES – Squirming on the Clippers' bench for the final 2:52 while the Phoenix Suns sliced a 10-point deficit to one was a gut-wrenching experience for rookie Blake Griffin, who wasn't able to exhale until Eric Gordon made a game-saving steal in the final minute.

Griffin had 28 points and 12 rebounds for his 18th straight double-double before fouling out for the second time this season, and the Clippers nearly blew an 18-point advantage before beating Phoenix 108-103 on Sunday to end a streak of nine straight losses to the Suns. "It was tough, but my teammates stepped up down the stretch," Griffin said. "It says a lot. I don't know how this kind of game would have gone if it was Game 3 or 4 or 5. But now that we're more comfortable with each other, guys know what to do."

The victory was the Clippers' first against their Pacific Division rivals since Jan. 15, 2008, and only their fourth in 19 meetings since losing Game 7 of the 2006 Western Conference semifinals at Phoenix.

Gordon scored 24 points and Baron Davis added 15 points and nine assists to complement Griffin's 24th double-double of the season.

Newly acquired Mickael Pietrus scored a season-high 25 points for Phoenix. Steve Nash finished with 21 points and 15 assists on "Boxing Day," which is a national holiday in his native Canada. Grant Hill had 19 points and seven rebounds while guarding Griffin, and even got under his skin on more than one occasion.

"Grant's unbelievable. He just battles and battles," Nash said. "He's so important to our team because he guards the other team's best player every night, whether it's a 2, 3 or 4. I don't know where we'd be without him. He did a phenomenal job today."

After trailing by 18 with 2 1/2 minutes left in the first half, the Suns narrowed the gap to 64-58 on Nash's 3-pointer with 8:48 left in the third quarter. They scored the final seven points of the period to close within one, and Pietrus tied it at 85 on a 3-pointer with 7:54 remaining.

"We thought he would be able to play for us like that," coach Alvin Gentry said. "He's an excellent shooter. But more than anything, I liked his toughness on the defensive end."

The Clippers responded with a 11-2 run capped by Griffin's three-point play and pulled ahead 96-87 with 5:55 to play. Pietrus, who committed a flagrant foul against rookie Al-Farouq Aminu during the run, stuck out his knee in an attempt to stop Griffin on his drive to the hoop.

The Suns narrowed the gap to 104-103 on a pair of driving layups by Nash, a dunk by Pietrus and a 3-pointer by Pietrus with 22.5 seconds to go. But Gordon stole the ball from Pietrus, leading to Aminu's clinching fast-break dunk with 4.6 seconds left.

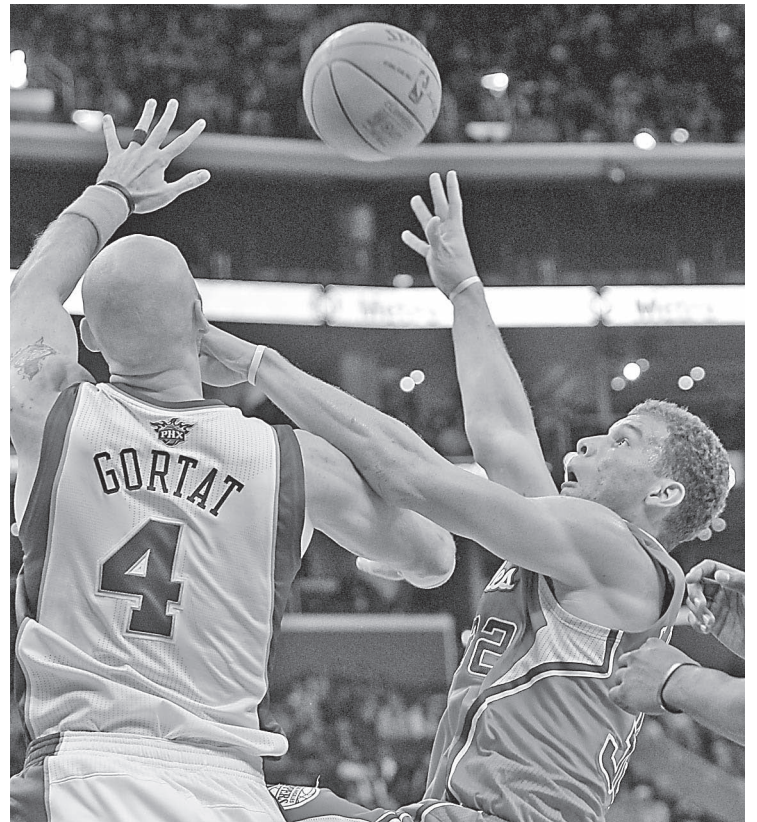
Griffin, who leads the league with 71 dunks, made one of his best — in terms of degree of difficulty — midway through the first quarter. He drove the left baseline, elevated above the rim and reached as far back as he could with his right hand to catch Davis' lob pass before throwing it down over Suns newly acquired backup center Marcin Gortat. It was his only dunk of the game.

"I wasn't sure if it was going to clear Gortat, but once it did, I just kind of watched it and the play just developed," Griffin said. "It was actually a very good pass for where Baron was at and where Gortat was at."

The Clippers, playing before their second sellout of the season at Staples Center, jumped out to a 31-16 lead. Nash missed all five shots in the first quarter and started out 0 for 7 before ending the drought with a four-point play 1:21 before halftime. Two-time MVP was fouled by Griffin on a 26-footer and converted the free throw. "We came out lethargic in the first half and dug ourselves a hole," Nash said. "I had a really sore back today and I just wasn't capable, so I struggled a little bit. I had some good looks, but I just couldn't make them and it cost my team early. I tried to contribute the best I could and not give in. But obviously in the first half, I wasn't very good."

Griffin committed another foul behind the 3-point line with 4:04 left in third, this one against Jared Dudley, who made two free throws to trim the lead to 78-71.

Vince Carter missed his fourth straight game since the Suns acquired him Dec. 18 with Gortat and Pietrus in a six-player trade with Orlando. The eight-time All-Star, who turns 34 on Jan. 26, hasn't played since Dec. 14 because of a sore left knee. □



Los Angeles Clippers forward Blake Griffin, right, releases the ball over Phoenix Suns center Marcin Gortat (4), of Poland, during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press



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NFL Roundup

Patriots top Bills 34-3, gain AFC top playoff seed



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady attempts a pass against the Buffalo Bills during the second half of an NFL football game in Orchard Park, N.Y., on Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010. New England won 34-3. Brady set an NFL record for pass attempts without an interception on the play.

Associated Press

The Associated Press
ORCHARD PARK, New York (AP) — The New England Patriots clinched the top seed in the AFC playoffs Sunday thanks to Tom Brady's three touchdown passes in a 34-3 rout over a familiar pushover, the Buffalo Bills. The Patriots (13-2) rolled to their seventh straight victory

in winning the AFC East division and beating the Bills (4-11) for the 15th game in a row dating to 2003. New England is 20-1 in its past 21 meetings against Buffalo. Two of Brady's TD passes went to rookie tight end Rob Gronkowski. Alge Crumpler and Danny Woodhead also scored for the Patriots, who

forced seven turnovers. Brady finished 15 of 27 for 140 yards and set the NFL record for most attempts (319) without an interception. He topped the mark set by Bernie Kosar in the 1990-91 seasons.

Rams 25, 49ers 17

At St. Louis, Sam Bradford set an NFL record for completions in a rookie season and his first touchdown pass in four games gave St. Louis breathing room in its playoff quest.

The Rams (7-8) need to win at Seattle next week to clinch their first playoff berth since 2004. Troy Smith was benched in the fourth quarter of a loss that eliminated the 49ers (5-10) from playoff consideration in the weak NFC West. Smith passed for 356 yards in the 49ers' overtime victory over the Rams last month, but did not play the last two games. Ted Ginn Jr. scored on a 78-yard punt return for San Francisco, his fourth career touchdown return.

James Hall had 1½ sacks for a defense that sacked Troy Smith three times and Alex Smith once, plus got a safety

when Troy Smith fumbled a poor shotgun snap in the end zone.

Ravens 20, Browns 10

At Cleveland, Joe Flacco threw two touchdown passes, Baltimore's defense bottled up Cleveland's Peyton Hillis, and the Ravens clinched their third straight playoff appearance.

Ed Reed intercepted rookie Colt McCoy twice as the Ravens (11-4) stayed in contention for the AFC North title. They remain tied with Pittsburgh for the division lead with one game left.

Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis promised Hillis would not repeat his 144-yard performance against Baltimore in Week 3, and the big back didn't, rushing for 35 yards on 12 carries.

McCoy threw three interceptions and the Browns (5-10) did nothing to help embattled coach Eric Mangini, who fell to 10-21 in two seasons and will await a postseason review by president Mike Holmgren.

Chiefs 34, Titans 14

At Kansas City, Missouri,

Matt Cassel threw three touchdown passes and Eric Berry returned an interception 54 yards for another score for Kansas City.

Cassel hit 12 of his first 13 passes for the Chiefs (10-5), including touchdown tosses to Jamaal Charles on their first two possessions.

The Chiefs' AFC West lead went to 1½ games over San Diego, with the Chargers at Cincinnati later Sunday.

The Titans (6-9) spent much of the game dropping passes, missing arm tackles and piling up penalties while losing for the seventh time in eight games.

The Chiefs' 10 wins matched their combined total of the previous three seasons. Their six-game improvement from a 4-12 record in 2009 is a team record.

Dwayne Bowe had six catches for 153 yards, including a career-best 75-yard touchdown as the Chiefs remained unbeaten in seven home games. If they win at home next week against Oakland, they'll clinch their first AFC West title since 2003.

Bears 38, Jets 34

At Chicago, Jay Cutler threw three touchdown passes, Matt Forte ran for 113 yards and Chicago closed in on a first-round bye.

The Jets (10-5) lost for third time in four games, but clinched their second straight postseason trip under coach Rex Ryan when Jacksonville lost 20-17 in overtime to Washington.

The win was the seventh in eight games for the Bears (11-4), who blew an early 10-point lead and regrouped in the second half after being picked apart by Mark Sanchez early. Now, they're in good position to lock up that bye, a scenario that seemed unlikely at best when they stumbled into their bye-week break.

Cutler completed 13 of 25 passes for 215 yards, with Johnny Knox catching four for 92 with two touchdowns. Sanchez was intercepted by Chris Harris with about a minute left, ending the Jets' comeback bid. □

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Pats clinch AFC home-field edge, Ravens get wildcard

BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

AFC teams seeking a Super Bowl berth must go through Foxborough, a place where Tom Brady doesn't lose.

The New England Patriots secured home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs by routing the Buffalo Bills 34-3 Sunday. Brady hasn't lost a home game in the last 27 regular-season outings, and the Patriots (13-2) are unbeaten in 16 consecutive regular-season games at Gillette Stadium since losing to Pittsburgh on Nov. 30, 2008 with Matt Cassel replacing the injured Brady.

But the Patriots lost their only playoff game last season, routed at home by Baltimore.

"We got a W, and that's our biggest present, being able to come into the locker room and being able to see that hat and T-shirt," nose tackle Vince Wilfork said. "That's something to be proud of."

Baltimore (11-4) still could win the AFC North — it's tied with Pittsburgh, which already has a playoff berth, but does not own the tiebreaker with the Steelers

in the division. The Ravens won at Cleveland 20-10, and must beat Cincinnati at home while Pittsburgh loses at Cleveland next Sunday.

"It doesn't matter (what Cleveland does)," Ravens star linebacker Ray Lewis said. "The only thing you can ask for in this business is to get in the dance. We're in and we have to take care of business against Cincinnati."

Failing to win the division means Baltimore gets a wild card, something the New York Jets already own. Although the Jets (10-5) were beaten 38-34 at Chicago, they qualified when Jacksonville lost to Washington 20-17 in overtime. Just like last season, when the Jets went to the AFC title game, they will finish second to the Patriots in the AFC East.

"This was a bit odd," said Jets running back LaDainian Tomlinson, who saw the Redskins win on TV. "We went from being down, a blown opportunity to 'we're in.'"

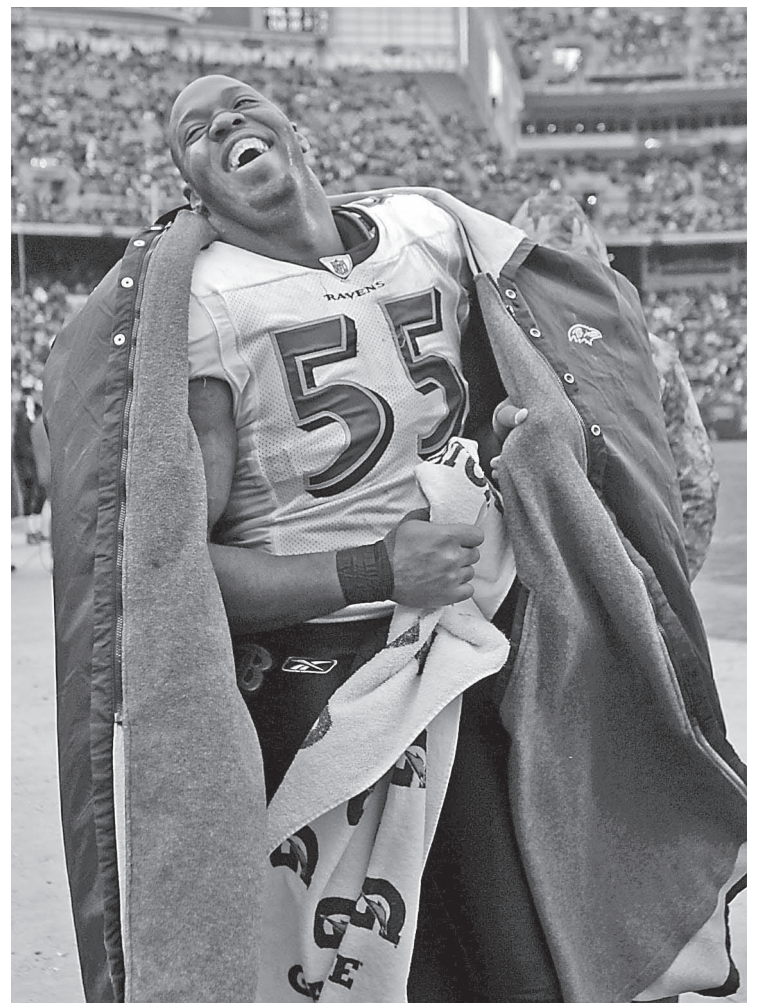
"I ran in (the locker room) and I was like, 'We're in.' Everybody was looking at me ... then all of a sudden

everybody starts to smile and talk, the mood just kind of lightens up."

Kansas City moved to the verge of its first AFC West championship since 2003 when it beat Tennessee 34-17. The Chiefs (10-5) could get in later Sunday with a San Diego loss at Cincinnati. But KC also takes the division by winning at home against Oakland in the season finale.

Jacksonville's loss did not finish it off in the AFC South. Indianapolis also began the day at 8-6 and was at Oakland. That division will be decided by next weekend's games: Tennessee at Indy, Jacksonville at Houston.

Atlanta and Chicago already have qualified for the postseason in the NFC. The Bears have won the North and are in position for a first-round bye. If the Falcons (12-2) win at home against New Orleans on Monday night, they will have NFC home-field advantage throughout the playoffs as well as the South title. The defending champion Saints (10-4) also get a playoff spot



with a victory or a loss by Tampa Bay to Seattle in a late Sunday game.

Even if the Seahawks fall to the Buccaneers, they can capture the NFC West by defeating St. Louis at Qwest Field next Sunday. The Rams (7-8) eliminated San Francisco in that weak division with a 25-17

victory.

Philadelphia (10-4) leads the NFC East and needs one more win or a Giants loss in a late game at Green Bay to take the division. The Eagles' night game against Minnesota was moved to Tuesday night because of blizzard conditions in Philadelphia.

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matinee: 12:00 - 2:30 **PG-13**
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daily: 6:15 - 8:45 **SP**
matinee: 11:15 **PG**

BLACK SWAN
daily: 4:30 - 6:45 - 9:15
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daily: 6:45 - 9:00
matinee: 11:15 **R**
late show:

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daily: 4:00
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daily: 4:15 - 6:30 - 8:45
matinee: 2:00 **PG-13**
late show: 11:15

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matinee: 1:00 - 3:15 **PG**
late show: 11:30

LITTLE FOCKERS
daily: 5:30 - 7:45 - 10:00 **NEW**
matinee: 12:30 - 3:00 **PG-13**
late show: 12:15

NARNIA "THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER"
daily: 5:00 - 7:30 **SP**
matinee: 12:00 - 2:30 **PG**

MEGA MINDY 2
daily: 5:00
matinee: 12:45 - 2:45 **PG**
late show:

THE TOURIST
daily: 4:00 - 6:30 - 9:00
matinee: 1:15 **PG-13**
late show: 11:15

BLACK SWAN
daily: 4:30 - 7:00 - 9:30
matinee: 12:00 - 2:15 **R**
late show: 11:45

LOVE AND OTHER DRUGS
daily: 7:00 - 9:15
matinee: 11:45 **R**
late show:

FASTER
daily: 10:00
matinee: 12:15 **R**
late show:

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"FAVI FUNDACION CU VISION"

Ovechkin leads Capitals past 'Canes, 3-2



Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) celebrates a goal against Carolina Hurricanes goalie Cam Ward (30) during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Raleigh, N.C., Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

By JOEDY McCREARY
AP Sports Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. — Alex Ovechkin had a goal to end an eight-game drought and added an assist for the Washington Capitals, who held on to beat the Carolina Hurricanes 3-2 on Sunday night.

Mathieu Perreault and David Steckel also scored for the Capitals. They have won three of four and swept the Hurricanes on their home ice for the first time since the 1997-98 season.

Tuomo Ruutu and Jussi Jokinen each had a goal and an assist, and Cam Ward made 28 saves for the Hurricanes. Carolina has lost three straight

in regulation for the first time this season.

Ruutu pulled the Hurricanes within one goal 30 seconds into the third period by deflecting in Jay Harrison's slap shot. Semyon Varlamov then stopped the final six shots he faced, finishing with 33 saves to help Washington improve to 4-0 in the season series.

Ovechkin, who hadn't scored since Dec. 6, made a heady play midway through the second that led directly to the go-ahead goal. He took the puck away near center ice, brought it across the blue line and around defenseman Jamie McBain before dishing off to

Steckel, who beat Ward with a wrist shot to make it 2-1 with 9:34 left. That pesky goal drought ended later in the period. Ovechkin hammered a rebound into an open net at 1:58 to make it 3-1 and give him his first multipoint game since Nov. 26.

Steckel's goal came about 3

minutes after Jokinen tied it at 1 by catching the Capitals on a line change. He finished off a 2-on-1 break with a snap shot that beat Varlamov.

Perreault put Washington up 1-0 with about 6 1/2 minutes left in the first period when he tapped in Alexander Semin's no-look centering pass for his

fifth goal. Perreault left the game for good about 5 minutes later after a bloody collision in the corner with Tim Gleason. That precipitated a brief fight between the Carolina defenseman and Matt Hendricks. Gleason was given a 5-minute charging penalty and was ejected. □

TAURASI

Continued from Page B1

The Turkish Basketball Federation statement cited a report from the lab at Hacettepe University and said: "... the urine sample taken from Diana Taurasi as a part of the regular process, after a game between Istanbul University and Fenerbahce ... tested positive for modafinil, one of the illegal substances on WADA's banned stimulants list, according to preliminary test results." WADA is the World Anti-Doping Agency.

"We're not going to confirm what the drug is," Taurasi's lawyer, Howard Jacobs, told The Associated Press Friday. "We'll revisit it after the 'B' sample returns. They shouldn't be speaking about it at all."

White won the 100- and 200-meter races at the 2003 world championships in Paris, but both her medals were stripped after she tested positive for the stimulant.

Jacobs said Taurasi's "A" sample came back positive last week and that the substance "was not a steroid or recreational drug."

Taurasi has been provisionally suspended pending the testing of her "B" sample, sometime early next month. She has already missed three games with Fenerbahce. The team's website said she and another player were asked to submit to a test on Nov. 13, following the game against Istanbul. It said they were selected as a result of a draw. The other player tested negative.

Fenerbahce said Taurasi was upset that the doping claims broke before the testing process was finalized.

"She is extremely disturbed that her right to confidentiality has been breached and doping claims have been made even before the results of her test



This Sept. 29, 2010, file photo shows Diana Taurasi, of Team USA, right, looking to pass as Jenna O'Hea of Australia, left, defends during their World Basketball Championship round of 16 match in Ostrava, Czech Republic. The Turkish basketball federation says a stimulant used to counter excessive sleepiness was the banned substance Taurasi tested positive for, leading to the WNBA standout's suspension from the pro team she's playing for in Turkey.

Associated Press

are out," the team's website said.

If the "B" sample comes back positive, it could put her 2012 Olympics status with the U.S. national basketball team in jeopardy. She has helped the team win gold medals at the past two Olympics and was the leading scorer at the women's world championships, which the Americans won in early October.

The International Olympic Committee bars any athlete given a doping penalty of six months or more from competing in the next games. "At this point we're aware of the situation and we're monitoring things and letting the process take its course," USA Basketball spokesman Craig Miller said. "Until that happens we can't comment." Taurasi's test came to light two days after the top-ranked Huskies won their 89th

straight game, surpassing the UCLA men's winning streak from 1971-74. Taurasi helped lead UConn to three straight national championships as well as 70 consecutive victories from 2001-03. She was the AP Player of the Year in 2003.

UConn's Geno Auriemma, who coached Taurasi and will lead the 2012 Olympic team, couldn't be reached for comment by telephone Friday. At the WNBA All-Star game last summer, Taurasi said the grind of playing basketball continuously for seven straight years was beginning to wear on her. At the time, she indicated fatigue could eventually force her to skip either the WNBA or European seasons.

Taurasi is one of many WNBA stars who play overseas in the winter because of higher salaries. □

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Assange says signed £1.1 million in book deals

LONDON – WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange said in an interview published Sunday he had signed deals for his autobiography worth more than one million pounds (1.2 million euros, 1.5 million dollars).

Assange told Britain's Sunday Times newspaper that the money would help him defend himself against allegations of sexual assault made by two women in Sweden.

"I don't want to write this book, but I have to," he said. "I have already spent 200,000 pounds for legal costs and I need to defend myself and to keep WikiLeaks afloat."

The Australian said he would receive 800,000 dollars (600,000 euros) from Alfred A. Knopf, his American

publisher, and a British deal with Canongate is worth 325,000 pounds (380,000 euros, 500,000 dollars).

Money from other markets and serialisation is expected to raise the total to 1.1 million pounds, he said.

The latest project of Assange's whistleblower website is the gradual release of tens of thousands of US diplomatic cables.

Since this latest project began Assange, who is on bail in Britain fighting a bid by Sweden to extradite him over the sex assault claims, has faced problems financing WikiLeaks.

Credit card companies Visa and MasterCard and the Internet payment firm PayPal have blocked donations

to WikiLeaks, prompting Assange to label them "instruments of US foreign policy."

The Bank of America, the largest US bank, has also halted all transactions to WikiLeaks.

Washington has been infuriated by WikiLeaks as the site slowly releases the cache of around 250,000 secret US State Department cables. The US is believed to be considering how to indict Assange over the the huge leak.

Assange has been staying at a friend's country mansion in eastern England since his release from jail on December 16 on strict bail conditions that include reporting to police daily and wearing an



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange prepares to speak to the media in the grounds of Ellingham Hall in Norfolk, eastern England, on December 17, 2010. WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange said in an interview published Sunday he had signed deals for his autobiography worth more than one million pounds (1.2 million euros, 1.5 million dollars).

electronic tag.

A court in London is due to hold a full hearing on the

Swedish extradition request starting February 7. □



FILE - In this Oct. 20, 2000 file photo, PayPal Chief Executive Officer Peter Thiel, left, and founder Elon Musk, right, pose with the PayPal logo at corporate headquarters in Palo Alto, Calif. Thiel who co-founded PayPal and gave Facebook its first big investment now wants Silicon Valley to buy into a bigger idea: the future. Thiel is backing groups that see a future when computers will communicate directly with the human brain. Seafaring pioneers will found new floating nations in the middle of the ocean. Science will conquer aging, and death will become a curable disease.

(AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

By MARCUS WOHLSEN, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO – In the movie The Social Network, the character of Peter Thiel is played as a slick Master of the Universe, a tech industry king and kingmaker with the savvy to see that a \$500,000 investment in Facebook could mint millions later.

Reality is a little more rumpled.

On a recent December night, Thiel walked, slightly stooped, across a San Francisco stage to make a pitch to an invitation-only audience of Silicon Valley luminaries — investors and innovators who

had scored sometimes huge fortunes through a mix of skill, vision and risk-taking.

The billionaire PayPal co-founder didn't tell them about the next big startup. He wanted them to buy into a bigger idea: the future.

A future when computers will communicate directly with the human brain. Seafaring pioneers will found new floating nations in the middle of the ocean. Science will conquer aging, and death will become a curable disease.

If anything can transform these wild dreams into plausible realities, he believes it is the entrepreneurs of

Silicon Valley — the minds and money that have conjured the technological marvels that have already altered everyday life.

"Do we try to pursue ideas that are weird and have optimism about the future, or do we give up on all new things and compromise?"

Sitting before him in the audience, among others: Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz, Yelp co-founder and CEO Jeremy Stoppelman and technology publishing guru Tim O'Reilly.

As venture capital in Silicon Valley chases the next big mobile app or group discount service, Thiel was asking for them to fund technological breakthroughs that some believe in fervently and others see as sheer fantasy.

He even has a name for it: Breakthrough philanthropy.

Instead of just giving to help the less fortunate here and now, Thiel encouraged his fellow moguls to put their money toward seemingly far-fetched ventures that he believes could improve the lives of everyone for good.

Gathered on the stage were eight groups that Thiel thinks are on the right path.

One was the Singularity Institute, whose members believe in the near-inevitability of the arrival within the next

century of computers smarter than the humans who created them.

The institute works to ensure that self-programming machines will create a world that looks more like Star Trek, less like the Terminator.

Another was the SENS Foundation, a group of biomedical researchers seeking a path to radical life extension based on the controversial aging theories of computer scientist-turned-gerontologist Aubrey de Grey.

And the Seasteading Institute, led by Patri Friedman, the grandson of famed economist Milton Friedman. It looks to establish distant ocean colonies to serve as laboratories for experimenting with new forms of government or "startup countries."

"As innovators, you are the best at finding and nurturing the right big ideas that can change the world," Friedman told the audience.

The history of Silicon Valley is filled with such ideas. The smartphone, the Web, the search engine, the personal computer itself — these all seemed far-fetched until they became commonplace.

To raise money from the wealthy, it's a time-honored strategy to flatter. Witness the names emblazoned across hospital wings and university

buildings. But building important buildings has never seemed to especially interest Silicon Valley's elite.

They have "the right kind of cultural DNA to at the very least pay attention," said Greg Biggers, a longtime software executive who recently founded a startup, Genomera, that lets members conduct health studies using their own genetic data.

Biggers said Silicon Valley entrepreneurs would likely be receptive to Thiel's unconventional message because they succeeded by not conforming to others' expectations of what was possible.

"This is a roomful of people who bucked the system," he said as he mingled, glass of wine in hand.

Charles Rubin, a Duquesne University political science professor and blogger who has written critically about some of the movements endorsed by Thiel, said these visions of the future align closely with the Silicon Valley outlook.

All share the view that "scientific knowledge and technical capacity will continue to increase at an accelerating rate," Rubin said. "This is a core idea that practically defines what Silicon Valley is all about: ceaseless innovation." □

Facebook, PayPal tycoon embraces sci-fi future



This undated file photo provided by Showtime shows sports film producer Bud Greenspan. Greenspan, who spent decades documenting the stories of Olympic athletes has died, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2010. He was 84.

(AP Photo/Showtime, Ted Batenburg)

Olympic filmmaker Bud Greenspan dies at 84 in NYC

By JIM LITKE,
AP Sports Writer

Bud Greenspan, the filmmaker whose documentaries often soared as triumphantly as the Olympic athletes he chronicled for more than six decades, died at his home in New York City. He was 84. He died Saturday from complications of Parkinson's disease, companion Nancy Beffa said. Even as controversies over politics, performance-enhancing drugs and commercialism began vying for attention on the Olympic stage, Greenspan remained unapologetic about his focus on the most uplifting stories from the planet's most spectacular sporting event. "I spend my time on about the 99 percent of what's good about the Olympics and most people spend 100 percent of their time on the one percent that's negative. I've been criticized for seeing things through rose-colored glasses, but the percentages are with me," he said in an interview with ESPN.com nearly a decade ago. He received lifetime achievement awards from the Directors Guild of America and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, as well as a Peabody and the Olympic Order award.

Continued on Next Page

"Little Fockers" underperforms at box office



Cast members (L-R) Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, and Dustin Hoffman arrive at the premiere of the movie "Little Fockers" in New York December 15, 2010.

LOS ANGELES — "Little Fockers," the critically maligned third film in the "Meet the Parents" comedy series, took the top spot at the Christmas holiday weekend box office in North America, but earned considerably less than its predecessor, according to studio estimates issued on Sunday. The latest Ben Stiller-Robert De Niro matchup sold just \$34 million worth of tickets during the three days beginning on Friday, said distributor Universal Pictures. The film got a two-day head start on the weekend, tallying \$48.3 million since opening on December 22. The studio said it had hoped for a five-

day haul in the \$60 million range, but was confident business would pick up over the holidays.

Exactly six years ago, the first sequel "Meet the Fockers" earned \$46 million during its first weekend and \$70.5 million in its first five days. In that case, the film also opened on Wednesday and Christmas also fell on a Saturday.

Just 11 percent of the top critics on Rotten Tomatoes liked the new film, according to the review aggregation Web site. Universal, a unit of General Electric Co's NBC Universal, partnered on the \$100 million project with international distributor Paramount Pictures

and closely held financier Relativity Media.

The next two movies starred Jeff Bridges, in decidedly different roles. "True Grit," the Coen brothers' update of the John Wayne western, opened at No. 2 with \$25.6 million for the weekend, and \$36.8 million since Wednesday. Bridges takes over Wayne's role as a grizzled U.S. marshal who helps a young woman avenge her father's murder. Paramount, a unit of Viacom Inc, released the film.

Last weekend's champ, "Tron: Legacy," fell to No. 3 with \$20.1 million for the weekend. The 10-day total for Walt Disney Co's sci-fi film rose to \$88.3 million. Bridges reprises his role from the obscure 1982 film "Tron" as a videogame developer trapped in a virtual environment called the Grid.

One other movie entered the top 10. The Christmas Day release "Gulliver's Travels" came in at No. 7 with a two-day haul of \$7.2 million. Jack Black stars in the effects-laden family film. The movie was released by News Corp's 20th Century Fox, which said the opening was "pretty promising." □

Playboy's Hefner proposes to 24-year-old Playmate

LOS ANGELES — In a Christmas message on Twitter, 84-year-old Playboy tycoon Hugh Hefner said Sunday he had proposed to girlfriend Crystal Harris, a former Playmate of the Month 60 years his junior.

"When I gave Crystal the ring, she burst into tears. This is the happiest Christmas weekend in memory," Hefner tweeted.

Hefner sent a second message on Sunday to clear up any lingering doubts about his intentions. "Yes, the ring I gave Crystal is an engagement ring. I didn't mean to make a mystery out of it. A very merry Christmas to all," it said.

Harris, a stunning 24-year-old blonde, did not explicitly confirm she had accepted his Christmas Eve proposal but, encouragingly, retweeted his messages. If the nuptials transpire, Harris will become



Playboy tycoon Hugh Hefner arrives at the premiere of "Iron Man 2" with his girlfriend, Crystal Harris, in Hollywood in April 2010. In a Christmas message on Twitter, 84-year-old Hefner said Sunday he had proposed to Harris, a former Playmate of the Month 60 years his junior.

the third wife of an ageless lothario who has used a whiff of sex and his own suave mystique to create the world of the consummate Playboy over the past six decades.

Known for his trademark red-satin smoking jacket and black silk pyjamas, "Hef," as he is commonly known,

incarnates the rakish lifestyle he popularized in another era. Seemingly intent on passing on the message of upmarket hedonistic fun to a new generation, Hefner has outlived not just the sexual revolution he fought from the vanguard but also some of his famous pin-ups. □



A theater worker cleans a showcard frame for "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark" outside the theater, in New York, Thursday, Dec. 23, 2010.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

Spider-Man actor walking again after back surgery

By SAMANTHA GROSS,
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A stunt actor who fell 30 feet while playing Spider-Man on Broadway is walking again, and his father said Saturday that he can't wait to return to the role despite injuries that have him confined to the intensive care unit.

Christopher Tierney walked Friday for the first time since his fall during Monday's performance of "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark" and was spending Christmas with his mother and brother in the hospital while recovering from back surgery, Tim Tierney told The Associated Press.

Julie Taymor, the director and co-writer of the \$65 million production, visited the injured actor in the hospital on Christmas Eve, Tierney said. The show — the most expensive ever on Broadway — has been plagued by technical glitches, money woes and three other injuries, including a concussion and two broken wrists.

"They're eagerly awaiting his return," the actor's father said from his home in Portsmouth, N.H. "He just felt so blessed to be part of this whole creative process, and he just cannot wait to get back and perform in the show."

Tim Tierney said he believes his son will regain close to full mobility after recovering from a roster of injuries that included a hairline skull fracture, four broken ribs, a bruised lung, internal bleeding and cracks in three lumbar vertebrae. □

Cheap concert seats due after cruel summer of 2010



FILE - In this July 3, 2009 file photo, Neil Diamond performs with the Boston Pops on the Esplanade in Boston. Neil Diamond, who's continuing his comeback tour in New Zealand in February 2011, said he'd like to bring ticket prices down, but can't because of the size of his production.

(AP Photo/Lisa Poole, file)

By RYAN NAKASHIMA,
AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Concertgoers sick of ballooning ticket prices should have some extra pocket change to rattle with their rock 'n' roll in the new year.

2010 was tough for the concert business as high prices kept many fans at home. Promoters now say they plan to make shows more affordable in 2011. But they'll also try to sell more T-shirts and other merchandise to make up for lost revenue.

Heading into last summer, usually the busiest time of the year, prices were set too high despite the sluggish economy. Managers and promoters believed fans would keep paying for the one or two concerts they see on average each year.

Instead, many stayed home and dozens of shows were canceled. Lots of venues filled seats with fire-sale prices.

Now, rather than charge lots early and offer discounts later, some promoters say they'll offer cheaper tickets from the start, partly because they know fans will spend as much as usual on beer and tchotchkes when they arrive.

ZZ Top, for one, expects to set prices below the 2010 average

of \$55. Some tickets will go for as little as \$10.

"It's time to give the value back," said Carl Stubner, manager of the long-bearded rock band from Texas. "We'll find other ways to make money."

That doesn't mean all acts will be cheap — not even Cheap Trick, whose tickets for 2011 are selling for around \$80 with fees. Fans of hot performers including Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga also shouldn't expect to get much of a break. Neil Diamond, for instance, who's continuing his comeback tour in New Zealand in February, said he'd like to bring ticket prices down, but can't because of the size of his production.

"As the shows get bigger, the expenses get bigger, so it's got to be translated somehow to the ticket price," he told The Associated Press. "If I just used the guitar it'd be a lot simpler, but then I'd have to put 50 people out of work."

Overall, though, more artists than ever are going out on the road to make up for falling CD sales. With more tickets on sale and consumers still pinching pennies, the pressure on prices is down.

Concert attendance fell 12 percent in the first half of

2010, compared with the same period a year ago, according to trade magazine Pollstar. The world's largest concert promoter, Live Nation Entertainment Inc., said attendance from July to September dropped 16 percent from a year ago, even after it slashed fees and prices for dozens of acts, including Rod Stewart. "It's just getting too expensive," says Michael Nemcik, who lost his job as a stockbroker in 2009 and now works as a bartender in Los Angeles. He went to about a dozen concerts in 2010, about half as many as the year before. Paying more than \$200 for decent seats to see A Perfect Circle in November

was just too much.

"I'm a little more hesitant on spending money than I used to be," he said.

Concert ticket prices had climbed steadily until recently, beginning in the 1990s when promoters began moving from one-price-fits-all ticketing to a tiered model that charges much higher prices for seats close to the stage.

North American concert ticket prices rose from an average \$26 in 1996 to a peak of \$67 in 2008, an increase four times faster than inflation. That doesn't include ticket fees for everything from "order processing" to "convenience," which can tack on \$10 or more. □

GREENSPAN

Continued from Previous Page

His best-known work was "The Olympiad," the culmination of 10 years of research, more than three million feet of rare, archived film, hundreds of interviews and visits to more than 30 countries. The 10-part series he produced was aired in more than 80 countries.

As a 21-year-old radio reporter, Greenspan filed his first Olympic story from a pay telephone booth at Wembley stadium at the 1948 London Games. With his eyeglasses familiarly perched atop a bald dome, he cut a distinct figure at nearly every Summer and Winter Games afterward. His most recent work dealt with the rough cuts of films from the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games.

Greenspan's career took off with a film he made in 1964 about Olympian Jesse Owens returning to the scene of his gold-medal achievements in Berlin some 30 years earlier. But he never lost his love for the smallest victories as well, citing a last-place finish by Tanzanian marathoner John Stephen Ahkwari at Mexico City in 1968 as his favorite Olympic moment.

"He came in about an hour and a half after the winner. He was practically carrying his leg, it was so bloodied and bandaged," Greenspan recalled in that ESPN.com interview. "I asked him, 'Why did you keep going?' He said, 'You don't understand. My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start a race, they sent me to finish it.' That sent chills down my spine and I've always remembered it."

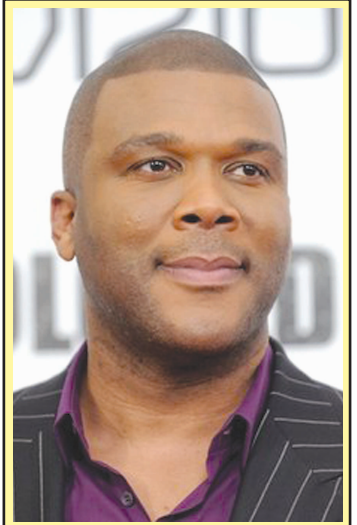
The International Olympic Committee described Greenspan as a "true supporter of the Olympic Games and their values throughout his career." In 1985, when Greenspan received the Olympic Order award, former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch called him "the foremost producer, writer and director of Olympic films; more than that, he is an everlasting friend of the Olympic family."

The admiration was mutual. Greenspan acknowledged the problems that plagued the Olympic movement, but rarely lingered over them in his films.

"They're two weeks of love," he said about the games. "It's Like Never Never Land. Like Robin Hood shooting his arrow through the other guy's arrow."

"It's a privilege to be associated with the best in the world. How many times are you with the best in the world in something? They bring things forward that they don't ordinarily do."

Greenspan, a native New Yorker, also wrote books and produced nearly 20 spoken-word albums. □



FILE - In this Oct. 25, 2010 file photo, Tyler Perry attends a special screening of 'For Colored Girls' at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York. Entertainment mogul Tyler Perry is offering to rebuild the home of an 88-year-old great-grandmother who lost all her belongings in a fire. Rosa Lee Ransby and her 4-year-old great-granddaughter escaped the fire Tuesday that destroyed her home of 40 years in Coweta County, southwest of Atlanta. Coweta County firefighters began soliciting donations, and calls flooded in.

(AP Photo/Evan Agostini, File)

Filmmaker Perry to rebuild woman's burned home

ATLANTA — Entertainment mogul Tyler Perry is offering to rebuild the home of an 88-year-old great-grandmother who lost all her belongings in a fire.

Rosa Lee Ransby and her 4-year-old great-granddaughter escaped the fire Tuesday that destroyed her home of 40 years in Coweta County, southwest of Atlanta. Coweta County firefighters began soliciting donations, and calls flooded in.

The Atlanta-based filmmaker visited Ransby's neighborhood Thursday and pledged to rent her a house for a year, pay for her utilities, buy her furniture and then build her a new home.

Coweta Fire Chief Todd Moore said Perry's decision "made my Christmas." □



An employee walks at Toyota Motor Corp's showroom in Tokyo November 5, 2010.

Toyota aims to lower break-even point for Japan operations

By Chang-Ran Kim,
Asia autos correspondent

NAGOYA, Japan – Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T) is aiming to significantly lower the break-even point for its Japanese operations through a slew of improved manufacturing processes, a top executive said on Friday.

Toyota President Akio Toyoda has said he wants to maintain domestic production of at least 3 million vehicles a year in Japan to protect jobs and the tradition of manufacturing, or “monozukuri,” at home despite headwinds from a stronger yen. Toyota is more exposed to a firm yen than rivals Honda Motor Co (7267.T) and Nissan Motor Co (7201.T) since it produces a bigger portion of its vehicles in Japan, and is under intense pressure to lower costs or take the politically difficult step of shifting more of its production overseas.

Nissan has especially been aggressive in pursuing ways to shield itself against a strong yen by importing more parts, as well as some cars, from overseas.

“We’re trying to be able to operate at 85 yen (to the dollar) and 70 percent capacity utilization,” Atsushi Niimi, executive vice president in charge of manufacturing, told reporters.

As the global financial crisis hammered sales and left much of its production capacity unused, Toyota embarked on efforts to make its domestic factory lines more flexible and introduce other changes to be able to break even at capacity utilization of 70 percent, equivalent to daily production of 12,000 units.

But that had assumed a dollar rate of 90 yen, far more favorable than the current 83 yen level.

Niimi said improvements in processes could reduce Toyota’s capital spending by about 40 percent, limiting annual expenditure to about 700 billion yen (\$8.4 billion) for the next five years or so. That is about half what it used to spend at its peak. One measure Toyota is taking is to make its engine assembly process more compact.

“We used to believe that the most efficient scale for an engine assembly line was about 18,000 units a month,” Niimi said. “But now we think half of that is better.”

He said that because emissions and fuel economy regulations were evolving all the time, engine production would fall to half in two to three years, hurting the pace of depreciation.

By changing the layout of the engine production process and making other changes, Niimi said Toyota’s engine production could be 20 percent more cost-competitive than Volkswagen AG (VOWG_p.DE), which he said was probably the leader now. □

Retailers roll out sales as snow threatens East

By MAE ANDERSON,
AP Retail Writer

ATLANTA – Shoppers hit the malls Sunday to spend gift cards on items Santa may have missed and pick over the clearance racks, though an East Coast snowstorm will crimp some plans. Washington, D.C., is expected to get 5 to 8 inches of snow. New York and New England could get even more Sunday and Monday.

“The forecast will tend to keep them at home, it’s not the best day for shopping,” said Scott A. Bernhardt, chief operating officer at weather research firm Planalytics.

But because the storm is after Christmas, the loss will be less significant than last year’s snowstorm the Saturday before Christmas that buried much of the same area. That one cost retailers about \$2 billion.

“People will redeem those gift cards through the week and through the next weekend,” he said.

The rest of the country had few weather problems, though, and retailers are rolling out deals to attract shoppers back to stores.

Strong sales this week would build on the highest-spending holiday season since 2007, which was a record year. Dec. 26-Jan. 1 makes up less than 10 percent of the Nov 1-Dec. 31 season but accounts for more than 15 percent of holiday spending, research firm ShopperTrak says.

The day after Christmas was the second-highest revenue day for retailers last year with \$7.9 billion spent, according to ShopperTrak.



People shop, in Selfridges department store in London, during the first day of the winter sales, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010. Retailers are hoping for a Boxing Day bonanza as prices are slashed in a bid to entice shoppers into Britain’s stores.

AP Photo/Sang Tan)

Bargains on the most desirable merchandise may be scarce.

“There will be good stuff on sale after Christmas, but what you really wanted will be sold out,” Stifel Nicolas analyst Richard Jaffe said. “You wanted the sweater in blue, the prettiest color, and it’s gone.”

That’s what happened to Lorraine McGrath. The 54-year-old wanted to pick up pajamas for her husband at J.C. Penney in New York first thing Sunday morning. She was one of the first people in the store but couldn’t find big-and-tall pajamas to fit her husband. She wasn’t impressed with the after-Christmas discounts. “To tell you the truth, there’s no difference between Christmas sales and after anymore,” said McGrath.

Shoppers were out before the snow at Roosevelt Field Mall on New York’s Long Island, Wall Street Strategies analyst Brian Sozzi said.

“Traffic is pretty solid as people are getting returns

done before the storm,” he said.

Some stores were light on inventory. The Gap was missing many sizes of sweaters and items from the Gap Body pajama and underwear collection were sold out. Inventory at Guess and Macy’s looked picked over, he said.

Across the country, stores expanded their hours and in some cases bringing in fresh merchandise to sell.

Discount chain Target Corp., which opened at 7 a.m., is offering \$10 off video games like “Just Dance 2,” 50 percent off many DVD and Blu-ray movies and 30 percent or more off toys, including Lego sets.

Toys R Us is touting a \$50 gift card with any \$299.99 Xbox 360 250GB System and a \$20 gift card with any \$149.99 Nintendo DSi or \$169.99 DSiXL.

J.C. Penney had 75 percent off gourmet candy, 60 percent off lambskin leather jackets, from \$300 to \$120 and 25 percent off kitchen gadgets. □



An employee walks at Toyota Motor Corp's showroom in Tokyo November 5, 2010.

Toyota aims to lower break-even point for Japan operations

By Chang-Ran Kim,
Asia autos correspondent

NAGOYA, Japan — Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T) is aiming to significantly lower the break-even point for its Japanese operations through a slew of improved manufacturing processes, a top executive said on Friday.

Toyota President Akio Toyoda has said he wants to maintain domestic production of at least 3 million vehicles a year in Japan to protect jobs and the tradition of manufacturing, or “monozukuri,” at home despite headwinds from a stronger yen. Toyota is more exposed to a firm yen than rivals Honda Motor Co (7267.T) and Nissan Motor Co (7201.T) since it produces a bigger portion of its vehicles in Japan, and is under intense pressure to lower costs or take the politically difficult step of shifting more of its production overseas.

Nissan has especially been aggressive in pursuing ways to shield itself against a strong yen by importing more parts, as well as some cars, from overseas.

“We’re trying to be able to operate at 85 yen (to the dollar) and 70 percent capacity utilization,” Atsushi Niimi, executive vice president in charge of manufacturing, told reporters.

As the global financial crisis hammered sales and left much of its production capacity unused, Toyota embarked on efforts to make its domestic factory lines more flexible and introduce other changes to be able to break even at capacity utilization of 70 percent, equivalent to daily production of 12,000 units.

But that had assumed a dollar rate of 90 yen, far more favorable than the current 83 yen level.

Niimi said improvements in processes could reduce Toyota’s capital spending by about 40 percent, limiting annual expenditure to about 700 billion yen (\$8.4 billion) for the next five years or so. That is about half what it used to spend at its peak. One measure Toyota is taking is to make its engine assembly process more compact.

“We used to believe that the most efficient scale for an engine assembly line was about 18,000 units a month,” Niimi said. “But now we think half of that is better.”

He said that because emissions and fuel economy regulations were evolving all the time, engine production would fall to half in two to three years, hurting the pace of depreciation.

By changing the layout of the engine production process and making other changes, Niimi said Toyota’s engine production could be 20 percent more cost-competitive than Volkswagen AG (VOWG_p.DE), which he said was probably the leader now. □

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New kind of HIV drug stalls infection in trial

By Kate Kelland

LONDON – A new kind of experimental HIV medicine can halt one of the earliest stages of HIV infection and may lead in future to a novel class of drugs to fight other dangerous viruses, German scientists said on Wednesday.

The drug, being developed by small privately held Hannover-based firm VIRO Pharmaceuticals, is called VIR-576 and reduced the amount of HIV infection in the blood by as much 95 percent in an early-stage trial of 18 patients.

It works by preventing the virus from being able to anchor itself in human immune cells, according to the researchers, who published a study in the Science Translational Medicine journal. “What the virus does is a bit like throwing an anchor to get hooked up to the cell,” Frank Kirchhoff, of the University Hospital of Ulm in Germany, said in a telephone interview. “This drug occupies the anchor -- which is called the fusion peptide -- and prevents its insertion into the cell membrane. So then the virus cannot get into the cell.”

Kirchhoff said VIR-576 is similar to other fusion

inhibitors such as Fuzeon, sold by Trimeris and Roche, but is designed block the infection process at an earlier stage.

According to latest figures from the United Nations, an estimated 33.3 million people worldwide are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS.

The virus can be controlled with cocktails of drugs, but there is no cure and nearly 30 million people have died of HIV-related causes since the disease first emerged in the 1980s.

HIV belongs to a group of viruses known as “enveloped” viruses, which also includes influenza, mumps, measles, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, Ebola and SARS.

Kirchhoff also said the discovery that VIR-576 can fight early HIV infection suggests it may be possible in future to develop similar blockers for these other viruses.

“It’s more wishful thinking than hard evidence at the moment,” he said. “It proves the principle, but now there is a lot more work to be done.”

In this trial in HIV, Kirchhoff’s team studied 18

HIV-infected volunteers who were treated for 10 days with one of three different doses of VIR-576, which is given via injection. None of the patients was taking any other type of HIV drug and VIR-576 was the first antiretroviral drug they had received.

The results showed that at the highest dose of 5 grams per day there was a 95 percent reduction in the patients’ viral load -- a measurement of the amount of HIV in the blood. Side effects were minimal and mainly involved soreness around the injection sites, Kirchhoff said.

The researchers said the results were encouraging but stressed that the experimental drug has some drawbacks which would need further work. Because VIR-576 is a peptide and must be given through injections, it will be costly and inconvenient to use, they said, and the high dose of 5 grams a day would also make it relatively expensive.

The team’s focus now is to hunt for a small molecule that works just like just like VIR-576 but that could be made cheaply and given orally in the form of a pill. □

Doctor Shortage Adds to Pain of Juvenile Arthritis

By Dennis Thompson

Most people think of arthritis as a disease of old age, with people’s joints growing creaky and painful later in life.

But arthritis also affects hundreds of thousands of kids in the United States. Children and teens with juvenile arthritis face a lifetime of aching joints and impaired mobility if the disease isn’t caught in time.

“There are about 300,000 kids that are affected by juvenile arthritis,” said Dr. Patience White, vice president of public health for the Arthritis Foundation and a professor of pediatrics and medicine at George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. “That means it’s more common than kids with type 1 diabetes.”

Though the disease itself isn’t rare, doctors specially trained to treat juvenile arthritis can be hard to find.

Fewer than 200 certified pediatric rheumatologists currently practice in the United States, making it one of the smallest pediatric subspecialties, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Thirteen states don’t have a single pediatric rheumatologist within their borders, including heavily populated states such as Arizona, South Carolina and Alabama.

“There are many families who have to travel many miles -- sometimes to another state -- to see a pediatric rheumatologist,” White said.

Three types of juvenile arthritis have

been identified, according to the Arthritis Foundation and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons:

- **Paciarticular juvenile arthritis** typically affects four or fewer joints. About half of the children with juvenile arthritis have this type. It usually affects the large joints, including the knees, ankles or wrists, and often strikes a joint on one side of the body while leaving the corresponding joint alone.

- **Polyarticular juvenile arthritis** affects five or more joints. About 30 percent of children with the disease have this type, girls more often than boys. It most often affects the knees, wrists and ankles but also can affect other joints such as the hips, neck, shoulders and jaw.

- **Systemic onset juvenile arthritis** causes inflammation throughout the body.

The child typically suffers from swelling, pain and limited motion in at least one joint, and the disease very often affects the small joints of the hands, wrists, knees and ankles. Internal organs such as the heart, liver and spleen as well as lymph nodes also may become inflamed, and children can develop rashes and fevers of 102 degrees or higher for weeks at a time. About 20 percent of children with juvenile arthritis develop this type, and it affects boys and girls equally.

Any child younger than 18 can develop juvenile arthritis, but there tend to be two age ranges when it’s more likely

to occur. There’s one peak at ages 2 to 4, followed by another peak at ages 8 to 12, said Dr. Harry Gewanter, a pediatric rheumatologist with Pediatric and Adolescent Health Partners in Richmond, Va., and a clinical associate professor of pediatrics and physical medicine and rehabilitation at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

“Their hallmark is you have a chronic arthritis that lasts at least six weeks in one or more joints,” Gewanter said. “Lots of kids will have problems with their joints that come and go for a variety of reasons, but there are very few things that are going to stick around besides something like this.”

It can be difficult for parents to know there’s something wrong with their child, however, because kids lack the ability to communicate pain effectively, White said. Most of the time, kids with juvenile arthritis have a limp, but parents generally think that the child hurt a leg or knee.

Parents should suspect juvenile arthritis if they notice the child limping more in the morning or after a nap; that’s because the joint grows stiff when it’s at rest. The affected joints also will be red and swollen.

Though various laboratory tests can be used to help narrow a diagnosis, there’s no one test to identify it. “It’s really more a combination of history and the exam and lab tests, and the pattern consistent with this illness,” Gewanter said.

Doctors used to try one arthritis drug after another until they found one that worked. These days, he said, they try to shotgun-blast the arthritis as hard as possible after diagnosis.

“We’ve taken a page from the oncologists in terms of going after this as aggressively as we can at the start,” Gewanter said. “We’re trying to jump in hard to shut down all the inflammation early, then peel medications away as you can.

If you take a child and treat them aggressively straight away, often you can just shut the whole thing down and change the course of the disease.

That kind of an approach really has made as much of a difference as anything else.”

It can be difficult for parents to find a doctor to provide such treatment, however, because of the shortage of pediatric rheumatologists. White said the shortage developed because the specialists make much less money than a general pediatrician, even though they have to undergo more extensive training.

Federal health-care reform might help solve the situation, though, as one clause in the law creates a loan repayment program for pediatricians who undergo training in a specialty such as rheumatology, White said. They would be granted extensions for their loan repayment.

“We’re excited about that,” White said, but he added quickly that Congress has not yet funded the program. □

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Biologists head to bunkers to fight bat disease



In this March 31, 2010 photo provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Susi von Oettingen, bats are seen in a bunker in New Hampshire. Oettingen is part of a team that will study the habitat of the bats over the winter.

(AP Photo/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Susi von Oettingen)

By KATHY McCORMACK, Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — Biologist Susi von Oettingen walked into the dark World War II-era military bunker and took out her flashlight. Among the old pipes, wires and machinery parts, she saw some bats hanging from cracks in the cement walls and ceiling. It was an unusual place for the bats to hibernate, different from a mine or cave. But something else was different, too: None of them had white-nose syndrome, a fungus that's killing bats across the country. The group of bats found last

winter in the New Hampshire bunker was small, recalled von Oettingen, an endangered species biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But two of the three species discovered there — the Northern Long-eared Bat and the Little Brown Bat — have been dying off from the disease. Starting as early as next month, von Oettingen will be part of a group of state and federal biologists monitoring that bunker and a few others in the state. They'll study temperature and humidity levels and put up footholds

for the bats, hoping to attract more and figure out if there's a way to control white-nose syndrome, first discovered near Albany, N.Y., in 2006.

"We may be able to maintain a white-nose-free site for these bats to return to," she said.

The disease, which appears to affect bats mostly during winter hibernation, has killed more than a million in the Northeast and has spread to at least 11 states, as far west as Oklahoma, and parts of Canada. Some caves on federal lands were closed to people this year to prevent them from spreading the disease.

Because the bunkers would be controlled, artificial settings, biologists also might be able to experiment with different treatments for bats with the disease, without worrying about how a spray or drug might affect other organisms. "This is one of the most promising things I've heard," said Nina Fascione, executive director of Bat Conservation International, an Austin, Texas-based group that focuses on research initiatives involving bats and their ecosystems. "It presents an excellent opportunity to test things."

One of the challenges is encouraging enough bats to use the bunkers, von Oettingen said. "They move around on the landscape, so it may be that they will naturally colonize it, or we may bring some in," she said.

Von Oettingen said New Hampshire plans to reach out to neighboring states to examine their bunkers. Some, such as the one she visited, are on state parks land. Others are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

"There's tons of bunkers of all different kinds out there on the landscape," from World War II, the Cold War-era, and afterward, she said. "Now the question is, do some of these have bats? And so far, we haven't found any more."

Bats hang out in all sorts of manmade structures, but the idea of monitoring them for white-nose syndrome in an artificial setting is relatively new. In Tennessee, the Nature Conservancy has proposed building a large dome-shaped cave, "like a giant upside-down underground swimming pool," said Cory Holliday, the program's cave and karst director. "You can apply whatever control you wanted in there and you wouldn't be affecting a natural ecosystem." Tennessee has about 15 species of bats, roughly half of which are potentially susceptible to white-nose syndrome. At least several hundred bats were found with symptoms last year. No deaths have been reported yet.

"We don't know with real certainty if it will work," Holliday said of the cave, "but with white-nose syndrome, it's moving really fast. We don't want to be left five years from now thinking, 'Well, I

wish we could have.'"

In October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service came out with a plan to investigate the cause of disease, in which a white fungus develops around bat muzzles, ears and wing membranes, and find ways to manage it.

Biologists say fewer bats, which eat insects, could lead to increased numbers of insect pests, resulting in harm to agriculture and forests. It is anticipated that white-nose syndrome will continue to spread, partly because the fungus can be carried on humans' clothing.

Under the plan, state agencies will monitor bat populations and design disease management programs. The federal government will assist in areas including research, education, funding and testing. Goals include setting up a central database, developing testing standards and continually reviewing knowledge of the disease to identify gaps and research needs.

In New Hampshire alone, surveys last year showed that the state lost over half of its hibernating bats.

"They're dead. They're gone. They're not here," said Emily Brunkhurst, a wildlife biologist for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

"The thing about white-nose is it is an unprecedented disease," Brunkhurst said. "We have never seen a disease in wildlife that affects so many species and is so rapidly fatal and spread so incredibly rapidly." □

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Ex presidente venezolano Carlos Andrés Pérez será enterrado en Miami

MIAMI (AP) - El ex presidente de Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez, quien murió el sábado de un paro respiratorio, será velado a partir del martes y enterrado el miércoles en Miami, dijo el domingo su familia.

“Queremos terminar todos los arreglos y darle chance a todo el mundo para que pueda llegar”, manifestó Cecilia Victoria Pérez, una de las hijas del ex mandatario, a The Associated Press.

“Queremos reconocer sus logros como presidente y demócrata. Queremos que en el velorio tenga su condecoración y la bandera venezolana”, explicó la joven de 29 años en una conversación telefónica. Ratificó además que su padre no será trasladado por ahora a Venezuela.

“Siempre quiso regresar a

Venezuela pero no es posible sino hasta que el señor (presidente de Venezuela, Hugo) Chávez no esté en el poder”, dijo Cecilia Victoria, quien vive en Atlanta y había viajado a Miami para pasar las fiestas de fin de año junto a sus padres y su hermana María Francia, que se trasladó desde su casa de Francia.

Sin embargo, Chávez manifestó que la familia de Pérez tenía “todo el derecho” de llevar sus restos a Venezuela para enterrarlo ahí. Chávez también expresó esperanzas de que el estilo de gobierno que representó Pérez “descanse en paz” junto con él.

Al conocer las declaraciones de Chávez, María Francia ratificó que no llevarán a su padre a Caracas porque “nunca estuvo de acuerdo con regresar con gobiernos



En esta foto sin fecha distribuida por la familia de Carlos Andrés Pérez, aparece el ex presidente venezolano con su esposa Cecilia Matos en su casa en Miami. (AP Foto/familia de Carlos Andrés Pérez)

antidemocráticos como el actual”.

La hija de Pérez, de 30 años, dijo que el regreso de los restos “no será algo apresurado” sino más bien “algo muy especial,

con todos sus honores”.

Negó, asimismo, que ella o su hermana Cecilia Victoria se hubiesen comunicado con el gobierno venezolano.

Pérez, quien en 1993 salió del

poder antes de terminar su segundo mandato en medio de un escándalo de corrupción, falleció el sábado a las 14.41 (18.41 GMT) en un hospital del sur de la Florida. Tenía 88

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